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### What Brings People to Leadership Roles: A Phenomenological Study of Beef Industry Leaders

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What Brings People to Leadership Roles:  
A Phenomenological Study of Beef Industry Leaders

by

B. Lynn Gordon

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Human Sciences  
(Leadership Studies)

Under the Supervision of Professor Jason D. Ellis

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2011

What Brings People to Leadership Roles:  
A Phenomenological Study of Beef Industry Leaders

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University of Nebraska, 2011

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Leadership and volunteerism have been deeply studied in the literature. However, little research could be found studying the role of volunteer peer leaders in non-formalized leadership roles in membership based organizations. This phenomenological study was designed to explore the experience of beef industry leaders in leadership roles.

Twelve beef industry leaders active at the local, state, and national level of beef industry membership organizations were interviewed and described their experience as leaders. Interview transcripts were coded and analyzed for themes. A definition of industry leadership was developed by the researcher based on the data gathered and themes which emerged. Industry leadership was defined as a role fulfilled by someone who is willing to serve their industry, with the best of the industry in mind and taking on the responsibility and challenges that come along with making decisions to serve and speak for their peers with integrity. Seven themes identified the central phenomenon of beef industry leaders and seven traits describing a beef industry leader were identified.

Current literature was reviewed and incorporated into the findings of this study. This study offers significance to the field of leadership, to the beef industry and to agricultural organizations offering a greater perspective on beef industry leadership which may guide the future development and role of leaders.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

“The U.S. economy and the American agricultural system are fraught with challenge and a host of problems—all of which will require a disciplined and reasoned approach if they are to be solved . . . great leaders sort through the chaos and confusion by staying focused on their core principles and the task at hand,” Dr. Tom Field, executive director of producer education, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. (Field, 2010, p. 254)

The beef industry is facing some of the most challenging times ever. Intensified competition in the meat case, ever changing international markets, private interest groups questioning production methods, low prices and high input costs, increased regulations on land, water and food safety issues, high land prices due to competition for productive crop acres, aging producers, and policy issues that can impede current production are all providing challenges for the industry (Armbruster, Halbrook, & Thompson, 2006; Field, 2010; Olynk, Tonsor, & Wolf, 2010; Otto & Lawrence, 2001). Regulations and specific production practices can be costly for producers to implement often with little return.

In a volatile industry impacted by the political agenda, there is no guarantee grassroots beef producers are protected or their best interests kept in mind in the development or implementation of new legislation. In order to keep one’s business viable, the beef industry requires cooperation or minimal interference from local, state and national governments (Catchings & Wingenbach, 2006). To represent the needs of the grassroots producers to state and national legislative bodies, a unified voice is critical and grassroots volunteer association members will be challenged to step up to the plate and provide leadership. There are many people and organizations involved in grassroots issues (Kellogg Foundation, 1993) including agricultural and beef industry organizations. “Grassroots leadership works best when the decision to invest in developing grassroots

leaders is a deliberate strategy, for example, intentional, proactive, and consistent” (Kellogg Foundation, 1993, p. 24).

A study on grassroots leadership conducted by the Kellogg Foundation (1993), concluded that when communities are truly intentional about grassroots leadership many benefits result, such as: more people get involved in all levels; new leaders have access to support; a pipeline of new leaders is developed; long-term leaders continue to grow and are renewed; new talent is developed for mainstream leadership positions and more of a grassroots perspective is present in business, non-profit and government management. “Grassroot leaders have different motivations and needs than those of traditional leaders” (Kellogg Foundation, 1993, p. 6).

The focus on volunteers in membership organizations is important primarily due to the fact that many of these organizations rely heavily on volunteers for their existence. Volunteerism has only recently received more focus of study as the role of volunteers is becoming more a more valued and critical resource. As organizations become more aware of this resource and how to efficiently utilize volunteers, organizations have gained interest in ways to improve recruitment, training, motivation and retention (Handy & Hustinx, 2009).

Those involved in agriculture in the United States realize the importance for volunteers to provide a strong and educated voice. These volunteers aid in identifying issues impacting agriculture at the community, state, national, and international level so that the needs of the industry can be addressed and lead the industry into the future. The process of stabilization and revitalization in agriculture begins with effective and active leadership and participation (Carter & Rudd, 2005).

“During tough times, leaders need to emerge and provide vision — the way forward. Strength is in numbers and everyone in the beef industry needs to be working towards providing the right products in order to survive” (Field, 2008b). Carter and Rudd (2006) state “A major responsibility of an organization is to cultivate leadership skills and pass on that knowledge to the next generation” (p. 167).

“The days of the super hero leader going at it alone are over . . . in modern society we need each other more than ever” (Kellogg Foundation, 1993, p. 25). Today’s complex issues and leaders and followers who are more diverse means more citizens are needed to solve community and grassroots issues (Kellogg Foundation, 1993).

Research suggests a need for more effective beef industry leadership. Purcell (2002) studied the challenges facing the beef industry and how the industry can address these challenges to survive after an 18 year decline in demand for beef. Purcell’s prescription for a healthy beef industry includes more adequate beef industry leadership. Purcell (2002) believes leadership needs to remain more open-minded about the issues, accept the issues and work to find a solution. Elected beef leaders must understand what is actually happening in the marketplace, hire competent, well-trained individuals to represent the industry, and take a more proactive leadership role.

In a year end review of the cattle markets, Speer (2008) reminds beef producers the reality of the challenges of the beef industry’s operating environment will continue to directly impact their businesses and how producers react to these challenges will determine the viability of the industry. Speer summarized,

That reality underscores the importance of remaining engaged! It's critical to be informed, remain objective and embrace versatility. Complacency is a killer amidst a turbulent business environment with lots of unknowns swirling around. To be sure, there'll be further challenges ahead. But then again, that's nothing new. And I've never known this industry to back up in tough times; participants have repeatedly proven resilience and determination. In the end, we'll take some luck but those benefits are usually pretty short lived; skill is where the long-term winners find themselves. (2008, p. 6)

Beef producers and industry employees are being challenged to step into leadership roles in order to assist the beef industry with a voice against political, consumer, environmental, and animal activist pressures. "The beef industry must find ways to engage a new generation of people who have "the right stuff" to assure a successful future" (Field, 2008a).

McCasin (1993) conducted a grounded theory study on rural community leadership development. He observed and interviewed citizens from rural communities who had participated in a community leadership development program. He concluded that leaders, leadership, relationships, and citizenship represent observable activities within the community and can be seen in the form of a product, process, possibilities, and participation. Each of these elements alone can result in a form of community improvement. McClasin (1993) determined that if these elements can be unified as a result of the commonality of purpose, then extraordinary events can emerge. McClasin's (1993) study demonstrated that leadership is a dynamic and synergistic relationship which because of its capability to result in human interaction, can contribute to the establishment of opportunities to serve a purpose.

The voice of the American beef producer comes through membership based organizations of which most are classified as nonprofit agencies. Membership is gained by paying annual dues, however leadership within organizations is voluntary. The beef

industry is not unlike other agricultural organizations who are working to sustain agriculture. The beef industry voice is demonstrated through a volunteer role where the producer or industry associate serves on a committee or board of directors (executive board). The volunteer leadership role in beef industry organizations results in a vital role for the support of the organization and the ability of the organization to meet their mission and goals (Mathews & Carter, 2010). During challenging economic times, family demands and the daily demands of operating a farm or ranch, time can be a limiting factor for many volunteers, especially those in the beef industry. Beef producers consider themselves humble folk and not leaders and thus taking the action to be a leader can be a difficult step for a beef producer (Mathews & Carter, 2010).

Organizations such as Farm Bureau gain strength from the county to the national level as grassroots individual members take on leadership roles in the organization (Carter & Rudd, 2005). Agricultural membership organizations and non-profits across the country rely on their membership to provide leadership on committees and boards from the county to the national level. Korngold (2006) believes many nonprofits are in need of board leaders who are ready to rise to the duty, can envision the greater potential, and can lead the way through revenue models and generating greater resources. Korngold says,

America's nonprofits are facing extraordinary challenges as they deal with funding cuts, changing communities and increasing needs. The responsibility to address these challenges falls squarely on the shoulders of nonprofit boards of directors and CEOs they hire. For nonprofits to succeed in today's tough environment, financial and strategic hurdles must be faced at the board level. Hence, the nonprofit boardroom has become the perfect environment for leadership development. (2006, p. 45)

## **Beef Industry Leadership**

The first known cattle producers' organization started in 1898 after several failed attempts to organize a formal association. Initially called the National Live Stock Association (NLSA) of the United States, the organization was developed to be "an association of associations" that would represent every branch of the livestock industry including sheep, chickens, cattle, hogs, goats and horses. After one year of organization the NLSA had 53 organizational members and represented 5,000 producers and nine million head of livestock. The organization's mission was to conduct legislative lobbying and industry-wide communication. Today, this industry membership organization is called the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) and consists of 25,000 members but through state affiliates and breed and industry organization members, it represents more than 230,000 cattle breeders, feeders and producers (Mathews & Carter, 2010; NCBA History, 2010a).

"Beef industry organizations have been established to inform, promote, regulate, support research and exert political influence in areas directly affecting their businesses" (Field & Taylor, 2003, p. 21). However, as Field and Taylor (2003) describe, a challenge exists between the approximately 850,000 beef cattle producers who seek to operate independently of a national organization structure. "The traditional independent philosophy of cattle producers can serve as a barrier to effective planning and adjustment to change" (Field & Taylor, 2003, p. 21). Therefore, the challenge exists to have coordination among beef producers and beef producer organizations and effective organizational leaders who can represent their members effectively.



Field and Taylor (2003) suggested cattle producers strive to work together because:

1. The impact of the government on the cattle industry will remain great. With less than 2% of the U.S. population involved in production agriculture government affairs should remain a focus of the beef industry.
2. Beef must be competitive against other meat food choices.
3. There is always a need for information that can contribute to making sound management decisions and the importance of continued education and training.
4. The industry needs an effective beef marketing program to increase the efficiency of beef production and stabilize or improve beef acceptance.
5. Continuous efforts to improve public and government understanding of the beef industry and its structure.

In an annual overview of the United States Cattle Industry released December 17, 2010, the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) reiterated the importance of the cattle industry to the nation's economy (NASS, 2010). NASS reported cattle production represented 43.8 billion dollars in cash receipts in the year 2009. Economic figures are tallied from all the components of modern beef production which spans from the cow-calf operators utilizing pastureland for grazing to cattle feedlots who focus on finishing cattle on grain for slaughter.

The 2007 U.S. Department of Census of Agriculture reports that the average age of principal farm operators has increased roughly one year in each census cycle, from 50.3 in 1978 to 57.1 in 2007. The majority of farm operators are between 45 and 64, but the fastest growing group of farm operators is those 65 years and older, this applies to the beef industry as well (NASS, 2007). With fewer young people choosing to return to the farm or ranch, this presents the challenge of fewer people taking over as leaders in organizations. The next generation of leaders will become fewer. Steve Foglesong, 2010 NCBA President commented in *National Cattlemen*, "The fact that fewer young people

are returning to production means that we also have fewer people to serve as the next generation of leaders for our association” (Foster, 2010, p. 13).

Leadership offers advantages for the individuals themselves. For those who take on the role of engaging on boards, commit themselves to participate in a meaningful way and function as a catalyst for change, the experience can be highly rewarding. Those willing to take on leadership roles distinguish themselves among their peers and begin the process of developing as true leader (Korngold, 2006).

Leadership scholar Bernard Bass stated,

The evidence is all around us. It is in our daily lives—our schools, businesses, social groups, religious organizations and public agencies. It is in our local community, our more distant state government and national government, and on the international scene. Leadership makes a difference. (Bass & Bass, 2008)

### **Research on Leadership in Agriculture**

Limited research has focused on current and emerging leaders in the beef industry and other agricultural organizations (Purcell, 2002). Beef industry leaders today are challenged to be the voice of their industry during difficult times (Field, 2008b; Speer, 2008). Due to limited research, organizations such as those in the beef industry do not have access to research on why some individuals become leaders, the perceptions of leadership and leadership traits. Many states in conjunction with their land-grant university or other educational institutions have initiated formal leadership development programs where adult leaders in agriculture spend one to two years in classroom and experiential learning settings to gain leadership skills. However, these leadership programs focus on leadership skill development such as communication skills (Hejny, 2010). Limited research has been conducted to study — what brings a person to leadership, especially leaders in non-formal leadership roles. This study will explore and

identify themes to validate why individuals serve in leadership roles, their perceptions of leadership, and their process in becoming a leader along with influences they have experienced.

Mathews and Carter (2010) pointed out that future research should be conducted to explore and understand patterns of participation and leadership in agricultural organizations with a focus on the perceptions and motivations of volunteers. This additional research would broaden the knowledge base of leadership in agricultural organizations and allow for comparisons on common issues, challenges, and leadership development.

Carter and Rudd (2006) agree that more extensive research should be conducted on leadership in agricultural organizations. The research should study organizational composition, leadership, changes in agriculture, membership and policy development. Comparisons could be made about membership characteristics, perceptions of power and influence in policy making and the leadership styles of the individual leaders.

### **Research Problem**

This study will assist in identifying and understanding why those involved in the beef industry choose to take on a leadership role. The study will provide a greater perspective of leaders in the industry.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to explore beef industry leaders in formal positions of industry membership organizations.

### **Central Research Question**

What is industry leadership to beef industry leaders?

**Sub-questions.**

1. How do industry leaders characterize industry leadership?
2. How do industry leaders explain the process to become an industry leader?
3. How do industry leaders describe what influenced them to become leaders within the industry?

**Purpose of Research**

The purpose of this study is to gain a greater perspective on why individuals become leaders in their respective organizations through a phenomenological study focusing on the central phenomena of beef industry leaders. While thorough research has been conducted on leadership in formal organizations and volunteerism in general, limited research has studied volunteer leaders in the absence of formalized power such as that found in membership based organizations. This qualitative study will explore leadership traits prevalent in beef industry leaders, identify influences and motivators of the individuals serving in leadership roles for their organizations and further analyze the structure of the industry and how leaders become leaders in such a setting. Findings will be used to guide future development of leaders for organizations and also for organizations to gain a greater awareness of volunteer issues such as training, recruitment and retention. This study will identify themes validating the findings of the study. It is anticipated that from these themes, organizations will benefit as well as agricultural leadership development programs and agricultural university curricula who are seeking guidance on learning and understanding more about industry leadership. This study may identify shortfalls which can be addressed by industry organizations to close gaps or limitations that may be hindering leadership participation and empowerment within the

organization. With the results of this study, organizations will be able to make available a rewarding volunteer leadership opportunity for the individual.

The role of agricultural organizations is to address issues that will directly and indirectly impact the livelihood of its members. Without solid, dedicated individuals in leadership roles, reaching organizational goals may be limited. Members are the lifeblood of organizations and their leadership is called upon to assist the organization with decision making and setting future directions.

### **Definitions**

#### **Beef Industry Segments:**

*Cow/Calf Operation*—This type of operation consists of cows who are part of a breeding herd that raise calves every year. The calves are managed from birth and then often marketed at six to 10 months of age. People who own or manage a cow/calf operation are referred to as cow/calf producers. In 2007, there were 766,350 beef cow operations in the U.S. (this would include seedstock operations) and 31 million head of beef cows.

*Seedstock Operation*—A specialized segment of the cow/calf industry that focuses on producing cattle to be sold for their genetic quality. Often seedstock producers are raising cattle that are sold to the cow/calf producer for breeding or production purposes. People who own or manage a seedstock operation are referred to as seedstock producers or purebred producers. In 2003, there were 120,000 seedstock breeders nationwide.

*Background Operation*—Cattle that are fed a warm up or conditioning ration that are normally fed to approximately 700 pounds and then sold as feeders or shipped to

another feedlot to be finished for the slaughter market. The cows and calves are grazed on range or pastureland. People who background cattle are referred to as backgrounders.

*Stocker Operation*—Young steers or heifers, weighing approximately 400-700 pounds, not in a feedlot or being kept for replacements. The aim is to utilize cheap feedstuffs while the animal develops frame and size before going into a feedlot for finishing on a high-grain ration. Producers who raise or manage stocker cattle are referred to as stocker producers. Stocker programs are often located on the wheat fields of Oklahoma, the Flint Hills grass in Kansas or the grazing lands of Florida. The actual number of stocker operators is difficult to track because this segment of the industry varies based on market influences.

*Feedlot (Feedyard)*—a location where cattle are grouped in pens and fed a ration to result in fattening or finishing the animals. Most cattle spend four to six months in a feedlot or until the cattle reach market weight and then they are sold to a processing facility. People who work in the cattle feeding industry are referred to as feeders. Approximately 25 million head of cattle are fed in U.S. feedlots annually.

*Packer*—The segment of the industry consisting of packers, purveyors and retailers who slaughter, process and distribute the end products produced in the beef industry. The packing industry manages approximately 26 billion pounds of beef annually. Beef is then sold from the packers primarily in boxes to the wholesale and retail industry.

*Retailer*—Primarily consists of grocery stores and supermarkets that sell beef products.

*Consumer*—Beef, the major end-product of cattle production is purchased and eaten by consumers. As the purchaser of beef, the consumer is important to the beef industry and consumer demand and preferences are followed closely by the beef producer.

**Additional Definitions:**

*4-H*—4-H is the nation's largest youth development organization with more than six million 4-H youth from urban neighborhoods, suburban schoolyards and rural farming communities enrolling in the organization. The organization empowers young people to reach their full potential and create positive change.

*BSE*—(*Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy*)—BSE is a progressive neurological disorder of cattle that results from infection by an unusual transmissible agent called a prion. On December 23, 2003, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a presumptive diagnosis of the first known case of BSE in the United States.

*Beef Checkoff Program*—Beef Promotion and Research Act established in October 1986. Each time cattle are marketed, \$1 per head is paid by the seller to the Beef Industry Council. Money is used in promotion, research and education.

*Breed Association*—National membership organizations that manage a national registry of seedstock cattle. Seedstock producers are often members of the breed association affiliated with the breed of cattle they raise and the producers pay a registration fee to get a registration paper documenting the genetics of their cattle. E.g. American Angus Association.

*Cattlemen's Beef Board (CBB)*—Responsible for the management of the beef checkoff program, oversees the collection of \$1 per head on domestic cattle as well as the

equivalent on imported beef, beef producers and cattle. Cattle producers are representatives on the CBB.

*FFA*—FFA stands for Future Farmers of America. In 1988 the official name of the organization was changed from *Future Farmers of America* to *The National FFA Organization* to reflect the growing diversity of agriculture. FFA strives to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

*Farm Bureau*—The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) (often referred to as Farm Bureau) is an independent, non-governmental, voluntary organization governed by and representing farm and ranch families united for the purpose of enhancing and strengthening the lives of rural Americans and to build strong, prosperous agricultural communities. Farm Bureau is local, county, state, national and international in its scope. Farm Bureau was organized in 1919.

*National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA)*—A non-profit trade association acting as the national spokesperson for all segments of the nation's beef cattle industry. Represents approximately 230,000 cattle professionals nationwide and is a membership-based organization including memberships from individual members, state affiliated cattle associations and affiliated breed organizations. Programs are financed by membership dollars.

*State Cattlemen's Organizations*—These are membership based organizations formed by the states to represent the views of beef producers. Some states have more than one membership organization with a beef industry focus and names of the organizations vary from state to state but for the purpose of consistency in this study, state



organizations will be referred to as “state cattlemen’s organizations.” (BEEF, 2010; CDC, 2011; Field & Taylor, 2003; NASS, 2010; National 4-H, 2011; National FFA Organization, 2011; American Farm Bureau, 2010; NCBA, 2010a).

### **Assumptions**

The researcher made several assumptions upon entering into this research study. The researcher assumed the research study participants would be open and honest in their answers to the interview questions. The researcher had no reason to believe that the participants would not answer the questions honestly and without thought and effort. The researcher also assumed that the six interview questions developed based on the central question and the sub-questions were developed to gather rich, thick descriptive responses from the participants and provide a greater understanding of the central phenomenon. A researcher conducts qualitative research because of the opportunity to “work with complex unstructured data from which new understandings can be derived” (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 27). The researcher assumed the questions were written clearly, without bias and in a format that would be clear and easy for the participants to understand and interpret. The final assumption made by the researcher was that participants would be interested in assisting with a study focusing specifically on the industry which they derive their livelihood from and that they would have great interest in reflecting on their experiences as a leader.

### **Delimitations**

This study focused on interviewing 12 men and women actively serving in leadership roles for beef cattle industry membership organizations. The sample size is reflective of that suggested in the research for a qualitative study (Creswell, 2007, Plano-

Clark & Creswell, 2010; Richards & Morse, 2007) however it is only a small representation of leaders in the industry. A larger sample size interviewing more leaders may result in additional or different findings. Leaders were selected representing different segments of the industry and thus any conclusions of difference in leaders from within each of these segments was difficult to measure due to such a small sample size. However, future research may want to focus on leaders just based on their roles, their age, or the segment of the industry they represent.

The beef industry faces different challenges and issues on a regular basis. Interviewing industry leaders at a different point in time may reflect on more preference of issues or the type of leader needed to lead during that time. Results may vary from this study, if a future study was conducted during a different time frame within the industry.

This study selected leaders who were active in leadership roles within the beef industry, however, there was not a strong emphasis or measurement focused on how many leadership roles the individuals were serving on at the time of the study. Some of the participants may be only serving in one leadership capacity at the time of the interviews and some of the participants may be serving in multiple leadership capacities. It is unknown how the level of activity in leadership roles may influence the participants. Participants who have served on a number of boards and committees and done so for many years versus someone who has not had the opportunity to serve in as many capacities may approach leadership differently or have a more extensive view from their additional experiences.

Even though the participants were selected by purposeful sampling, there is the risk that some of the interview participants will not be as vocal in their responses as

others or as comfortable with a telephone interview situation. Thus the researcher runs the risk of some individuals not articulating their thoughts to the same degree as others.

### **Limitations**

The researcher was interested in hearing from beef producers, from across the United States, who are serving in leadership roles. As a result, the interviews had to be conducted over the telephone because of time and cost constraints. Participants were asked to locate a quiet place for the duration of the interview to prevent interruptions and distractions. This is often difficult to do with telephone interviews as some of the participants were interviewed in their offices during business hours and, although they worked to focus on the questions being asked in the interview, it is difficult to have complete focus from the participants.

The researcher informed the participants that the study was being conducted for the completion of the researcher's doctorate degree in Leadership Studies. In addition, the researcher did inform the participants that she has a background in the beef industry so the participants would be comfortable that the researcher would understand the terminology they were expressing about the beef industry. Phenomenological researchers are asked to bracket prior knowledge about the topic and do so by writing their assumptions and expectations to enter the conversation with no presuppositions (Richards & Morse, 2007). The researcher had heard the names of several of the participants prior to conducting the study, primarily because of their visual leadership roles in the beef industry and membership organizations. The researcher only knew two of the individuals personally and one more so than the other.

As an active leader in the industry professionally and personally, the researcher was aware that her own perspective and views could bias the collection of data and the data analysis. The researcher strived to remain unbiased and objective and conducted bracketing (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994), to reduce the prevalence of bias.

### **Significance of Study**

While there are many studies conducted regularly on leadership and many books authored on the topic of leadership there has been limited research conducted on leadership in a non-formalized leadership setting such as membership organizations. Adult agricultural leadership development programs continue to be conducted, most of which are associated with land-grant institutions. However, these program focus on training individuals to be leaders, particularly those who have expressed an interest in leading. Limited research has focused on what brings people to leadership roles in non-formalized leadership settings. This calls for continued research and understanding of how leaders view their abilities and abilities of other peer leaders in the organizations to establish a culture that cultivates leaders.

This study set out to take a different look at leadership by interviewing individuals who are currently in leadership roles and having them look back through the process and steps that brought them to a position of leadership and what motivated them to become an active industry leader. In addition, leadership in membership organizations is more representative of volunteer leadership rather than the more typical leadership role found in the business world of today. Because of the difference in the structure of the leadership role, this study took a closer look at the styles of leaders involved in this structure to learn more from the participants about the ways in which leaders are

identified or selected for leadership roles within a beef industry membership organization.

As themes were identified from the data, this research provides a foundation for agricultural organizations seeking to maintain and develop leaders within their organizations. This research will allow the industry to gain a broader perspective and understanding on those who are leaders in the industry, how they define a leader and how they view industry leadership. With this knowledge, organizations can work with their membership to seek out leaders who will be a good fit for the organization and for leaders to understand the expectations a volunteer leadership opportunity will represent.

The role of agricultural organizations is to address issues that directly and indirectly impact the livelihood of their members. Without solid, dedicated individuals stepping into leadership roles, organizations will be challenged to reach their goals and mission. Members are the lifeblood of organizations and the leadership abilities of membership can result in a thriving and viable organization.

### **Summary**

This chapter described a qualitative research study developed to study what brings beef industry leaders to leadership roles. The purpose statement, research questions and proposed research method were described in Chapter One along with the assumptions, delimitations and limitations. The significance of the study to the field of leadership study within agricultural organizations was also discussed.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

A literature review provides the researcher with information that is known and not known about the topic. In addition to gaining a greater understanding, “a qualitative study may fill a void in the existing literature” (Creswell, 2007, p. 102). While a review of the literature is often more extensive in a quantitative study to justify the importance of the research problem and the rationale behind the purpose of the study — in qualitative studies, literature reviews are less extensive to allow focus on the views of the participants to be studied in the central phenomenon (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010). Predictions about findings are not made in qualitative studies, rather the focus is on “whether the findings of a study support or modify existing ideas and practices” (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 118).

This study will add to the existing literature on this topic and this chapter represents a review of current literature specific to leadership, leaders, leadership development, and volunteer/grassroots/organizational leaders as well as a look at the beef industry structure. This literature review will help to identify a theoretical framework for this study by describing leadership within the beef industry and what brings leaders to fill leadership positions. This literature review will provide a greater understanding of issues surrounding leadership in membership based organizations within agriculture.

#### **Leadership**

Leadership is a widely discussed and researched topic (Bass & Bass, 2008). Not only have thousands of research articles been written on the topic, but Amazon.com

reports as of April 2011, 12,755 books were for sale on the topic of leadership. The popularity in leadership based on the number of books written, confirms “leadership is a highly sought-after and highly valued commodity” (Northouse, 2010, p. 1). People are intrigued to know what makes a good leader.

Leadership has been studied both qualitatively and quantitatively studying small groups and large organizations as people seek to find how leadership influences their personal, social and professional lives (Northouse, 2010). One of the most common elements researchers have sought to determine is a definition of leadership.

“It is a commonplace observation that leadership plays an important role in the creation, survival, growth and decay of organizations” (Conger & Kanungo, 1998, p. 3). Therefore to gain a greater understanding about leadership is important to organizations, and so is a common definition of leadership so comparisons can be easily made across organizations. However, defining leadership is not so easily done. Yukl (1998) found leadership to be defined in many different ways and Barker (1997) found that leadership was rarely defined by the scholars.

The commonality in the definitions reviewed by Yukl (1998) was “influence is exerted by one person over other people in an attempt to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organization” (p. 14). In a review of articles in the early 1990s published in *Leadership Quarterly*, Barker (1997) found that many of the articles focused on leader abilities, traits or behaviors and did not identify a definition which could be commonly applied to the discussion on leadership.

In the case of organizations working towards developing leadership training programs the challenge exists to have a common definition of leadership so that

organizations can target or focus leadership training development with a solid foundation on leadership. Without a common definition in the literature, it can be difficult for organizations to develop training programs because of limitations of the understanding on traits and behaviors of leaders. Barker (1997) expressed concern about the development of creating leadership programs that would not truly be based around the study of leadership traits because of the lack of agreement of what leadership really is.

In one of the early books focusing on leadership, James McGregor Burns (1978) defined leadership as,

the reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers. (p. 425)

Burns (1978) identified two types of political leadership — transactional and transformational. He said transactional leadership occurs when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of something which is valued. Leaders will approach followers with a focus on the exchange. Yukl (1981) agreed with Burns' (1978) definition of transactional leaders, saying transactional leadership is focused around the exchange between both the superior and the subordinate in a way that both involved will derive something of value from each other. In transactional leadership, leaders give followers something they want in exchange for something back. Leaders become influential to the follower, because by doing what leaders want is in the best interest of the follower (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). A leader is an effective transactional leader if they fulfill the expectations of their followers (Kellerman, 1984).



Bass (1985) describes transactional leaders as those focused on achievement of personal or organizational outcomes. Transactional leaders identify the roles followers must carry out, job responsibilities or task requirements to reach their personal goals in the steps towards reaching the mission of the organization. Bass (1985) took Burns' (1978) ideas of leadership and applied them to the organizational setting.

Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership as “more than the compliance of followers: it involves shifts in the beliefs, the needs and the values of followers” (in Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987, p. 648). Burns (1978) believed that transformational leaders have the ability to elevate followers into leaders. Transformational leadership differs from transactional leadership as it focuses on the personal values and beliefs of the leaders rather than an exchange of items between the leader and follower (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

Bass (1985) and Burns (1978) both agreed that transformational leaders operate due to value systems. Bass (1990a, 1990b) describes transformational leadership as superior leadership performance and it occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group. Transformational leaders also act as mentors to help others grow and develop. Table 1 defines the characteristics of transformational and transactional leaders according to Bass (1990a, 1990b).

Bass (1990a) believes transformational leaders are charismatic leaders with whom employees want to identify with. Just as transformational leaders do, charismatic leaders inspire and excite employees or followers with the belief that they can accomplish great

Table 1

*Characteristics of Transformational and Transactional Leaders*

	Characteristic
Transformational Leader	
Charisma	Provides vision and sense of mission, instills pride, gains respect and trust
Inspiration	Communicates high expectations, uses symbols to focus efforts, expresses important purposes in simple ways
Intellectual Stimulation	Promotes intelligence, rationality and careful problem solving
Individualized Consideration	Gives personal attention, treats each employee individually, coaches, advises
Transactional Leader	
Contingent Reward	Contracts exchange of rewards for effort, promises rewards for good performance, recognizes accomplishments
Management by Exception (active)	Watches and searches for deviations from rules and standards, takes corrective action
Management by Exception (passive)	Intervenes only if standards are not met
Laissez-Faire	Abdicates responsibilities, avoids making decision

Source: Bass (1990a, 1990b)

things but charisma alone is not sufficient for one to be identified as a transformational leader (Yukl, 1998). According to Bass (1990a), the term charismatic leader was introduced by Max Weber in 1924 and Weber defined charismatic leaders as “being extremely highly esteemed persons, who are gifted with exemplary qualities” (p. 184) and have extraordinary influence over their followers. Charismatic leaders are known to emerge in times of crises and thus are often influential in bringing about change in organizations, groups or societies (Bass, 1990a). Some literature has used the terms charismatic and transformational leadership interchangeably (Yukl, 1998).

In his comparison of transformational and transactional leadership, Bass (1990a, 1990b) found transformational leaders to be more effective, have better relationships with their supervisors and make more of a contribution to the organization. In addition, followers exert more effort on behalf of transformational managers than transactional managers and transformational leaders are more likely to be viewed as effective leaders than transactional leaders. “Transformational leadership can be learned and it can—and should—be the subject of management training and development. Research has shown that leaders at all levels can be trained to be charismatic” (Bass, 1990b, p. 27).

Podsakoff, McKenzie and Boomer (1996) refer to the works of Yukl (1989) when stating followers are motivated by transformational leaders because of trust and respect for the leader and to Kouzes and Posner (1987) who stated honesty, integrity and truthfulness were leader characteristics most valued by followers.

Bass (1985) and Burns (1978) identified leaders by their actions and how the actions of the leaders impacted others. In Bass and Avolio’s (1993) view of transformational leadership, they believed a leader could be transformational and transactional. Their model was focused around: charisma or idealized influence; inspiration; intellectual stimulation; and individualized consideration. They believed, “leaders can motivate subordinates to performance levels that exceed both their own and their leader’s expectations” (as cited in Conger & Kanungo, 1998, p. 14).

However, Barker (1997) believes that since Burns’ definition of leadership in the late 1970s, researchers have taken the definition and reduced it to slogans, tried to tie it to economic value, confused leaders with managers and considered it associated with

authority, sometimes confusing leaders as those who have obtained high positions by going against integrity.

Virtually every definition of leadership encountered in both scholarly and practitioner oriented writings . . . focuses on the knowledge, skills, abilities, and traits of the leader which are presumed to be the most successful in getting followers to do what the leader wants them to do. (p. 344)

Barker (1997) refers to Dubrin's (1990) definition of leadership as "the process of influencing the activities of an individual or group to achieve certain objectives in a given situation" (p. 255) a definition which appears similar to that of transactional leadership. In 1991, Rost reviewed 587 works that had the word leadership in their title, finding that 366 of them did not define leadership and many confused the content of leadership with the nature of leadership. Rost (1993) agreed that a great deal of the focus in the study of leadership was on personality characteristics and traits and a lesser focus on the skills and competencies of the leaders. Rost (1993) refers to this focus on skills as the industrial paradigm of leadership but mentions Hoskings and Morley's (1988) work taking a more modern approach to skills and leadership and determining that decision-and policy-making skills are the most important to leaders.

Rost (1993), defined leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and their collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (p. 99) in his focus to gain a greater perspective of leadership in the 21st century. Rost (1993) goes on to describe his more contemporary definition of leadership as one that must contain four basic components, and each of which is essential to have leadership in a relationship. First, the relationship must be based on influence and this influence does not necessarily have to represent "authority" or "top-down." Secondly, the relationship is defined as between leaders and followers and both must be active. Thirdly, both leaders and

followers intend real change and there must be opportunity to promote this change. The final component takes place when change occurs. This change is not just the focus of the leader who is intending change, but because change is also desired by the followers. Basically, this definition centers on a definition of leadership where the leader and follower's result is for the collective good.

Overall, Rost (1993) believed leadership consisted of the “influence relationship wherein leaders and their collaborators influence one another about real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (p. 100). In Table 2, Rost (1993) summarizes the differences between the view of leadership from what he terms as the traditional industrial paradigm, with that of a more current view of leadership in the 21st century he refers to as the postindustrial paradigm. Because of his identification of this new postindustrial paradigm, Rost (1993) believes that changes may be needed in how leadership is viewed and how leadership development training occurs.

Table 2

*Two Contrasting Paradigms of Leadership*

Industrial Paradigm (Traditional view)	Postindustrial Paradigm (21 <sup>st</sup> Century view)
Good Management	Process distinct from management, good or bad
Leader behavior/traits	Leaders and collaborators interacting in a relationship
Do the leader's wishes	Do what both leaders and collaborators want
Pursue any and all organizational goals	Pursue purposes that intend real changes
Use any legitimate behaviors only	Use influence behaviors only

Source: Rost (1993, p. 100)

“If leadership is not what the leader does but what the leaders and collaborators do together to change organizations” (Rost, 1993, p. 101) then he sees leadership and the leader as different. He suggests that in developing people to be leaders the focus should be on people who want to work collaboratively with other people and people willing to work in teams to initiate change.

Contrastingly to Rost (1993), Barker (1997) believed there was a value of focusing on the abilities and characteristics of leaders, because this would be effective for the development of leadership training programs whereas, Wren (1994) believed the role of citizenship was a function of leadership, and leadership education was important in the development of citizens gaining abilities to resolve complex issues or problems.

Not only has the definition of leadership resulted in many different definitions but Fleishman et al. (1991) found there has also been difference in classification systems developed to define the dimensions of leadership (as cited in Northouse, 1997).

Northouse (1997) identified four components that are central to the phenomenon of leadership (Table 3). They are: (a) leadership is a process, (b) leadership involves an influence, (c) leadership occurs within a group context, and (d) leadership involves goal attainment. From these components, Northouse defined leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 3). The most common component across the definitions of leadership is that leadership is an influence process assisting followers (individuals) in reaching a common goal (Northouse, 1997). Northouse (1997) focused his studies on the basis that when an individual is engaged in leadership, the individual is a leader whether the person was in a

Table 3

*Components Central to the Phenomenon of Leadership*

Component	Description
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not a trait or characteristic that resides in the leader</li> <li>- An event that occurs between leader and followers</li> <li>- Leader affects and is affected by his followers</li> <li>- Interactive between leader and follower</li> </ul>
Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How the leader affects the follower</li> <li>- If no influence then no leadership</li> </ul>
Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leadership occurs in groups</li> <li>- Influencing a group of individuals who have a common purpose</li> </ul>
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Directing a group of individuals towards accomplishing a task</li> <li>- Individuals are trying to achieve something together</li> <li>- Individuals moving towards a goal</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Northouse (1997, p. 3)

position of created leadership or whether the person stepped up and filled in the role of an emerging leader.

Early leadership studies were conducted to identify what made certain people great leaders (Northouse, 2010) and was called trait approach. Trait approach focuses on the leader and suggests that having a leader with these characteristics may be crucial to having more effective leadership in a group. Not without its shortfalls, the trait approach fits the study of leaders well, since leaders are considered to have different traits than others not considered leaders. The varying situations where leadership can occur and the subjectivity of the traits can be shortcomings of the theory (Northouse, 1997).

In 1948, Stogdill conducted a survey to “identify a group of important leadership traits that were related to how individuals in various groups became leaders” (Northouse,

2010, p. 16). Stogdill identified eight traits that set an individual in a leadership role apart from the average individual but says that an individual does not become a leader due to these traits but that they are situation specific. Table 4 identifies results from Stogdill's 1948 study as well as a repeat of his study in 1974 and those of other researchers who studied leadership traits. Stogdill's 1974 survey validated the concept of traits and that a leader's characteristics are part of leadership. As studies continued on traits of leaders, Zaccaro, Kemp and Bader (2004) expanded their study to measure social abilities, the ability of the individual to understand their own feelings, behaviors and thoughts (as cited in Northouse, 2010). Northouse (2010) summarizes the traits found from trait approach studies and indicates the following list as the primary traits for leadership: intelligence; self-confidence; integrity; determination; and sociability.

Northouse (2010) describes each of these five primary traits in his book *Leadership, Theory and Practice*. He describes intelligence as indicated by characteristics such as verbal ability, perceptual ability, reasoning, and problem-solving skills. Self-confidence according to Northouse is the "ability to be certain about one's competencies and skills" (p. 20) and includes self-esteem, self-assurance and belief they can make a difference. He also concluded from his review of past research studies on the trait approach that determination was an important trait for leadership. Determination was described as the desire to get the job done which was indicated by traits such as initiative, persistence, dominance and drive as well as the ability to persevere in the face of obstacles. Integrity was also identified as a trait and described as honesty and trustworthiness which then instills confidence in others. Leaders with integrity have a



Table 4

*Studies of Leadership Traits and Characteristics, A Historical View*

Stogdill (1948)	Mann (1956)	Stogdill (1974)	Lord, DeVader & Alliger (1986)	Kirkpatrick & Locke (1991)	Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004)
Intelligence	Intelligence	Achievement	Intelligence	Drive	Cognitive abilities
Alertness	Masculinity	Persistence	Masculinity	Motivation	Extroversion
Insight	Adjustment	Insight	Dominance	Integrity	Conscientiousness
Responsibility	Dominance	Initiative		Confidence	Emotional stability
Initiative	Extroversion	Self-confidence		Cognitive Ability	Openness
Persistence	Conservatism	Responsibility		Task Knowledge	Agreeableness
Self-Confidence		Cooperativeness			Motivation
Sociability		Tolerance			Social Intelligence
		Influence			Self-monitoring
		Sociability			Emotional intelligence
					Problem solving

Source: Northouse (2010, p. 19)

strong set of principles and take responsibility for their actions. The final trait identified by Northouse (2010) was sociability. Leaders who show sociability are friendly, outgoing, tactful, and diplomatic. They are sensitive to others and work to create cooperative relationships with followers.

Kouzes and Posner (2002) developed a model of leadership stemming from their focus on transformational leadership in their attempts to describe a leader, but with the focus on behavior not traits (Table 5). From their interviews with 1,300 middle-and-senior level managers in private and public sector organizations they constructed their model of leadership. The model has five fundamental practices which enable leaders to accomplish extraordinary things. The fundamentals were: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart.

Table 5

*Five Fundamentals of the Model of Leadership*

Fundamental	Behavior
1. Model the Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear about their values; articulate their thoughts; follow through on promises</li> </ul>
2. Inspire a Shared Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visualize the future and positive outcomes; their vision leads others; challenge others beyond status quo</li> </ul>
3. Challenge the Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge the status quo; experiment and try new things; take risks;</li> </ul>
4. Enable Others to Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trust and collaboration; team players; listen closely to both sides; create an trusting environment</li> </ul>
5. Encourage at Heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reward others for their accomplishments; give praise to others; celebrate successes.</li> </ul>

Source: Kouzes and Posner (2002), Adapted from Northouse (2010, p. 184)

With *model the way* leaders set a personal example for others to follow and for their own behaviors. “Titles are granted, but it’s your behavior that wins you respect,” explains Kouzes and Posner (1995, p. 12). Leaders who model the way don’t ask others to do things they are unwilling to do themselves and are clear about their guiding principles. Leaders who *inspire a shared vision*, challenge others to excel and create visions for others to strive toward. Leaders who inspire a shared vision, “have a desire to make something happen” (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 11). The third fundamental is *challenging the process*. In this fundamental step, leaders are willing to take risks to make things better, they blaze new trails. “Leaders know well that experimentation, innovation, and change all involve risk and failure, but they proceed anyway” (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 10). Outstanding leaders are also able to *enable others to act*. They create an atmosphere of teamwork, cooperation and listen closely to the view of others and treat others with respect. The final fundamental identified by Kouzes and Posner (2002) is *encourage the heart*. Leaders are attentive to the needs and support of others, as a result they are willing to give praise to their followers and the outcome is an essence of community support. The Kouzes and Posner (2002) model focuses on behaviors and “it recommends what people need to do in order to become effective leaders” (cited in Northouse, 2010, p. 185). Behaviors for this model are measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) developed by Kouzes and Posner (2002).

Robert Greenleaf (1977) launched a leadership movement with his essay, *The Servant as a Leader*. Greenleaf (1991) determined, “the great leader is seen as servant first,” (p. 63) and “begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first” (p. 66). Those fulfilling roles as servant first, are focused on making sure others’ priority

needs are being met. The servant leader fosters a strategy for the organization that comes from the group and through the process of exploration, listening, encouraging and assisting the individual or group with their direction, purpose and vision (Greenleaf, 1977). The leader begins in the role of listening, searching and expecting to find a better way to do things. From this experience as a servant, the leader is better equipped to fulfill the role of a leader. Since Greenleaf first coined the term ‘servant leadership’ it is impacting people and organizations (Spears, 2010). Servant leadership is dramatically different than the traditional perspective studied on leadership. With servant leadership the focus is involving others in the decision making process, demonstrating a caring and ethical behavior; interested in the growth of employees (followers) and the success and improvement of the organization (Spears, 2010). Based on Greenleaf’s original work, Spears (2010) identified ten characteristics of a servant leader: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth of people, and building community. Greenleaf (1977) and Spears (2010) believe that servant leaders go the next step and abandon self-interest in support of the interest of those they are serving.

Barbuto and Wheeler (2002) proposed a framework based on Greenleaf’s (1970) servant leadership model and ten characteristics of servant leadership identified by Spears (1995) and added “calling” as an additional characteristic (as cited in Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) went on to develop five dimensions of servant leadership. They concluded these five dimensions offer evidence of strong relationships between transformational and servant leadership behaviors. The five servant leadership factors emerging from their research results were:

1. Altruistic Calling—The motivation begins with the desire to serve and willingness to serve others in selfless ways. The leader puts others' interests ahead of his/her own.
2. Emotional healing—The ability of the leader to be highly empathetic and great listeners which creates an environment of facilitating the healing process. Leaders work to create an environment where followers are comfortable voicing concerns.
3. Persuasive Mapping—The ability to map the issues and conceptualize the bigger picture and articulate opportunities for the organization. They work to encourage others to visualize the future.
4. Wisdom—Leaders have the ability to be aware of their surroundings and anticipate the issues and consequences.
5. Organizational Stewardship—The effort of taking responsibility for the actions of the organization and the well-being of the community with the essence of fostering an environment of “giving back.”

Hejny (2010) conducted a qualitative case study on adult agricultural leadership development. Fifteen men and women who were past participants in a formal agriculture leadership development program were interviewed to learn more about the leadership skills and concepts learned by participants during the tenure of the program. The participants defined leadership as “someone moving a group or cause in a direction towards a goal that has been mutually agreed upon” (p. 109). Abilities gained from participation in the formal leadership program were improved public speaking and communication skills, self-confidence and human relations skills. Hejny concluded that

the participant leadership styles may align with some of the characteristics of a transformational leader and also that of a servant leader.

Leaders in membership organizations are hard to compare directly to leaders in an organizational development setting. Leaders in membership organizations are often volunteer leaders, leading and working alongside their peers rather than the more traditional leader in an organizational development setting who is a leader with the responsibility to manage or direct employees/followers. As a result, leaders in membership organizations are more suited to being referred to as peer leaders. Limited research exists on the study of peer leadership where peers are leading and guiding other peers in the absence of formalized power that is found in the business model or organizational development models.

In a study on leadership identity Kornives, Mainella, Owen, Osteen, and Longerbeam (2005) found student leadership identity was connected to developmental influences, developing self, group influences, students' changing view of self with others and students' broadening view of leadership. One of the developmental influences was peer influences. Same-aged peers served as role models and motivators for involvement and also a model of leadership and older peers served as mentors (Kornives et al., 2005).

This study will allow for a greater perspective of the qualities and characteristics which may be representative of the type of leadership styles (transformational, transactional, charismatic, servant, peer) found in beef industry leaders. It will also view current leaders and their leadership actions to allow for further analysis of the paradigm representative of beef industry leader roles. But, most importantly will be the themes that

surface from this group with the commonality of leadership to identify what brings people to leadership.

Many of the literature references above have addressed leadership. However, the bulk of the literature on leadership is reported from research conducted in an organizational development setting. Most leadership research has focused on the leader in a business setting providing oversight to employees and thus the common terminology of leader and follower. Transformational, transactional and servant leadership are all based around the common workplace setting. With limited resources on leadership in a non-formalized setting this study will open the door for more research in this field.

**Leaders or Managers.** The literature presents the challenge of the difference between a manager and a leader (Kotter, 1988; Yukl, 1998). Kotter (1988) discussed these differences. In his works, he believed leaders were focused on “constructive or adaptive change” and management was focused on “consistency and order.” Leadership was focused on the long-term issues of the organization and management was focused on short-term issues. Leadership acquires commitment to performance empowerment; management does so through contractual arrangements. To Kotter (1988), leadership consisted of three essential characteristics that set it apart from management. These characteristics were: (a) challenging the status quo, (b) focusing on a creative vision for the future of the organization, and (c) promoting appropriate changes in followers’ values, attitudes, and behaviors through the use of empowering strategies and tactics.

Barker (1997) describes the role of managers as fulfilling the tasks of goal setting, operational planning, providing structure, motivating others to pursue organizational goals, and directing activities of others. Managers are responsible for allocating and

controlling resources to reach a specific objective. People are often considered leaders, because of their ability to manage. However, he describes a fundamental difference between leadership and management. The difference occurs in the roles and functions a leader or manager may serve for an organization. “The function of leadership is to create change while the function of management is to create stability” (Barker, 1997, p. 349).

The new school of leadership, which surfaced by researchers in the 1980s, believed North American corporations had difficulty adapting to a changing world because the organizations were directed by too much management and too little leadership. As leaders set out to reach a mission, leaders and those led were transformed, thus the focus on transformational leadership (Bass, 1990a). Transformational leadership focused on organizational change and empowerment (Conger & Kanungo, 1998).

Much of the work done in leadership has been in the field of organizational behavior studying the effectiveness of a leader on their followers and thus the comparison between manager and leader terminology and roles. Because of the confusion between what these terms mean, there is still much to be learned by looking at how the literature defines each of them.

Researchers have studied trust and the role and relationship of a leader with their followers (Bass, 1985, 1990a, 1990b; Burns, 1978; Yukl, 1989). However, this study will focus more on the leader — themselves. Yes, there will be cases where they are influencing followers in the membership organization. However, the typical organizational development model does not apply directly to this study. These leaders are volunteer leaders of membership organizations, not paid leaders fulfilling a career or serving as an employee such as a general manager or executive of an organization who



oversees a number of employees. The focus of this study is on the role of leadership by beef industry leaders not necessarily looking at their impact on employees and employee satisfaction but rather on trust and respect from followers which in many cases will be their peers.

Using the literature review as a guide will aid in how leaders are defined and aid in selecting the leaders to participate in this study. Leaders impact others such as followers by offering something in exchange, but they also have the ability to unite followers to achieve higher levels of performance by empowering followers (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Leaders find themselves carrying out roles of leadership within or for organizations. Leaders are often called leaders because of their role or function in an organization, such as a committee chair or board member. Leaders have the ability to manage people but are different than managers. Leaders must be able to motivate group members to engage in beneficial behaviors (Tyler, 2002). Therefore this study will select participants reflective of these descriptions and definitions of leaders.

**Sources of Motivation.** What was missing from each of Burns' (1978) and Bass' (1985) descriptions of leadership was a focus on understanding the personality differences that can impact the type of leadership style one will possess (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Fortunately, recent research has focused on the development of a taxonomy to aid in the understanding of individual behavior (Barbuto & Scholl, 1998).

Barbuto and Scholl (1998) developed the Motivation Sources Inventory instrument to predict leadership influence tactics, transformational leadership behaviors and follower compliance. Five sources of motivation were identified and include:

intrinsic, instrumental, external and internal self-concept and goal internalization. The model has been proven to be reliable and valid for determining sources of motivation.

When a person is motivated to perform certain tasks because of the sheer enjoyment or fun associated with that task, the person is intrinsically motivated. It is the work itself which acts as the motivator to the person (Barbuto & Scholl, 1998). Internal motivation develops from attitudes such as things a person wants to do. One of these is intrinsic motivation which occurs when someone enjoys the activities they do (Tyler, 2002). Barbuto and Scholl (1998) believe that workers are also motivated by the rewards in which they may receive for the work they do. In this case it may be pay, promotions, bonuses, etc. This type of motivation is called instrumental motivation.

An individual can also be motivated by external or internal self-concept. If they are motivated externally, the worker seeks affirmation of the work that they do. They need to know that they are completing tasks correctly and that their competencies are recognized by the leadership. Those individuals motivated internally are referred to as inner-directed. In this situation, the individual sets internal standards of traits, competencies and values that are ideal with their internal self. The individual sets their own goals to strive to meet and are self-directed to accomplish the tasks (Barbuto & Scholl, 1998).

The fifth source of motivation identified by Barbuto and Scholl (1998) is goal internalization motivation. In this motivation source, the individual adopts attitudes and behaviors that are congruent with their personal value system. The worker is motivated by the cause and believes in the cause and value systems of the organization.

Tyler (2002) determined two types of motivation underlie the ability of leaders to gain cooperation in groups. One is the desire for people to gain rewards and avoid punishments and the second is people's internal attitudes and values, in other words, what shapes what people want or feel they should do. Commitment and loyalty to the group has also been identified as a motivation of volunteering. People identify with the group or organization and thus are more apt to volunteer (Carter & Rudd, 2005; Tyler, 2002) and care about the well-being of the group and its members (Tyler, 2002). Tyler (2002) describes this identification as social identity theory. In this theory, individuals in groups identify with those groups and merge their sense of identity with the groups. Once people identify with groups they are willing to put the welfare of the group above their own welfare. Group members will maximize the group outcomes over their personal outcomes. The benefit of the group becomes an internal motivator.

However, Tyler (2002) describes that in the case of no identification with a group, and the individual does not have a sense of connection with the group or organizations, the individual does not have the desire to participate or support the group. The individual has a feeling of apathy towards the group.

Leaders play an important role in creating and sustaining a group with which individuals can become loyal and committed to. The feeling of group identification encourages cooperation on behalf of the group and because people merge their sense of themselves with the group. The important role of attitudes and values in stimulating cooperation suggests the importance of creating a supportive culture or value climate within a group. Leaders need to stimulate intrinsic interest in group roles, identification with the group, and the development of moral values and feelings that group authorities are legitimate. (Tyler, 2002, p. 779)

Martinez and McMullin (2004) conducted a study which concluded that members who were active in an organization belonged almost twice as long as non-active

members. Active members witnessed the effects of their efforts, witnessed organizational success and achieved a level of personal accomplishment. Overall they believed they made a difference. Building structures of authority and identifying leaders were also key to the success of the cooperation in a group. In the group situation, leaders must be able to motivate group members or they will be unable to fulfill their role as a leader (Tyler, 2002).

In this study, data collected from the participant interviews may lead to further analysis of motivational sources for today's current beef industry leaders. References made in the interviews that can be linked back to the identified five sources of motivations will be further discussed in the findings if evidence indicates such underpinnings can be made. If linkages can be made to identifying motivation sources then this will result in valuable information about the differences or commonalities among the leaders.

**Volunteer Leaders.** About 63.4 million people or 26.8% of the population volunteered through, or for, an organization from September 2008 to September 2009 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010), up slightly from 26.4% in 2008. The report found male volunteers spent a median of 52 hours volunteering and females 50 hours. About 44% of volunteers became involved with their main organization after being asked to volunteer, most often by someone in the organization and 40.9% became involved due to their own initiative to volunteer.

Handy and Hustinx (2009) reviewed three recent books that discussed the why and how of volunteering. They discovered the lack of a common definition for volunteering and thus believe it is difficult to make comparisons across volunteer

organizations and groups, yet realize how important volunteering is to membership organizations that rely heavily on their volunteers to maintain existence. They determined association volunteers rank the values dimension the highest – the ability to act on one's own values or promote the values of the organization is found to be the most salient reason people give for volunteering.

Volunteers are vastly different than employees because they are not rewarded with pay or direct financial benefits for their work (Peters, 2010). Yet, Musick and Wilson (2007) as cited by Handy and Hustinx (2009) noted volunteerism is a form of work because it demands skills and competencies. Education was identified as the most consistent and important predictor of volunteering, but other relevant resources were income, occupation, free time, health, gender and race.

Volunteerism has been extensively researched (Peters, 2010) as many non-profit organizations, social service agencies, churches and school systems utilize volunteers. Studies on volunteerism included Yeung's (2004) phenomenological study on the motivations of volunteers which concluded motivation was the cornerstone of volunteerism and Kulik's (2007) study of volunteer responses to volunteering yielded satisfaction as a reasoning why leaders volunteers (as cited in Peters, 2010). However, Kulik (2007) also found burnout to be a negative reasoning resulting from volunteerism and Garland, Myers, and Wolfer (2009) found the most common challenges to volunteering to be fear, time, overwhelming need and burnout (as cited in Peters, 2010).

In his own phenomenological study of volunteerism Peters (2010), studied the experience of empowerment among volunteers to determine if providing greater empowerment of volunteers can attribute to the effectiveness of volunteers in

organizations and enhance retention. Four primary themes were identified from his study of Christian Church volunteers including, make a difference, rewarding, lifestyle of service and passion. Church volunteers expressed their desire to help others through something they had already experienced and were empowered to volunteer because of the satisfaction they received from helping others. The volunteers were driven to volunteer and had great passion for their volunteer work so much so that they could not imagine their life without a role in volunteer service. Peters (2010) concluded volunteers in a church setting were empowered to “change themselves to be able to incorporate service into their lives in a larger capacity” (p. 63).

The importance of values to volunteers was found in two of the three volunteerism books studied by Handy and Hustinx (2009). They cited empirical research conducted on the volunteer function inventory studied by Snyder, Omoto, and Stukas (2000). “The ability to act on one’s own values or promote the values of the organizations is found to be the most salient reason people give for volunteering in most studies” (Handy & Hustinx, 2009, p. 554). In addition to values, individuals volunteer to serve others and for self-serving reasons.

A major responsibility of an organization is to cultivate leadership skills and pass on that knowledge to the next generation of leaders. Eisinger (2002) states, “once associations identify future volunteer leaders, they must offer specific training programs” (p. 14). Much of this training needs to be directed towards those volunteers who are serving on organizational boards as they sometimes lack the necessary skills to be effective board members. Pernick (2001) states there are two advantages of building leadership talent within an organization.

First, the next generation of leaders is groomed by the organization and can instill the culture and agenda of the organization and secondly, an organization has greater control over the supply of leaders with the necessary skills, which makes implementation of the organization's agenda easier and quicker. (p. 429)

Adult leadership programs are designed to teach men and women about agricultural policy development, improve leadership skills and abilities, increase knowledge in state, national and international affairs, and prepare the individuals to be problem-solvers, decision-makers, and spokespersons for the industry (Hejny, 2010). These adult leadership programs were initiated in 1965 when the W.K. Kellogg Foundation supported the Kellogg Farmers Study Program at Michigan State University. As cited in Hejny (2010) "The goal of the program was to provide agricultural and rural leaders with a broader view of society, as well as a greater sense of the world and how they fit into the bigger picture" (Kellogg Foundation, 2001, p. 1). A review of the Nebraska Leadership Education/Action Development Program (LEAD) conducted by Askren, 2005, reported that for 85% of the participants saw an improvement in their communications and human-relations skills and 92% reported an increase in their leadership abilities as a result of participating in the program (as cited in Hejny, 2010).

One such example of a voice for American agriculture is the American Farm Bureau Federation (2010). Carter and Rudd (2005) studied factors which influenced leadership participation in Farm Bureau. Active members of the Florida Farm Bureau Federation were measured against their sources of motivation, attitudes towards volunteering and their views on serving on county Farm Bureau boards. The study found that how the individual evaluated their role as a volunteer to be the strongest determinant towards their willingness to volunteer for additional leadership responsibilities in, or service on, a county Farm Bureau board. Other factors ranked high by the volunteers

were: volunteering activity factor, Farm Bureau events attended, members in other youth organizations (e.g. 4-H, FFA), and participation in leadership development programs.

Carter and Rudd (2006) studied the expectations of county Farm Bureau board members with a focus to measure the extent to which the members practice the leadership expectations of the state Farm Bureau leaders. The study also measured the level of importance and proficiency board members place on the skills they have to fulfill the role as a board member. Competencies were measured in the areas of leaders, political process, effective boards and knowledge of Farm Bureau. Conclusions found gaps between the importance of the competencies and proficiency levels.

In a study to determine what impacted group members to become active in a grassroots political campaign, Hinkle, Fox-Cardamonde, Haseleu, Brown, and Irwin (1996) determined grassroots organizations did not find it difficult to identify people with the attitude and willingness to support an organization when they supported the cause of the organization. The study determined that people join grassroots organizations because their attitudes are aligned with the attitudes of the organization. As a result of time and financial constraints people prefer to become politically active through an organization.

Martinez and McMullin (2004) conducted a survey of members of an organization to identify characteristics and assess motivations of the active and also nonactive members of the organization. Active members made decisions on volunteering based on competing commitments and efficacy of their actions. Overall, the study concluded that recruitment and retention of volunteers could be more successful by increasing the awareness of volunteer programs, ensuring programs offer results that are



in line with the goals of the volunteers, requesting participation by volunteers and recognizing volunteers for their actions.

Van Til (1988) described five characteristics of volunteerism which included: people volunteer to satisfy personal and social goals; individuals volunteer only after weighing alternatives; different people are attracted to volunteer for different tasks and due to different motivational forces; the volunteer's concern for helping others and the motivation to give back to the social community. Successful volunteer programs offer more meaningful and effective tasks for volunteers and the ability for the volunteers to aid in the success of the program or organization.

Babchuck and Booth (1969) conducted a study of voluntary associations and identified the importance of structure and function of the association itself, as well as family status, age, work, family stage, and life stage, to reasoning for membership in voluntary programs. They also found that membership tenure is often greater and turnover lower in groups that have multiple objectives, large memberships, and long histories.

Kajer (1996) studied volunteer leaders in agricultural organizations and found motivations to lead in agricultural organizations was a concern for people, but the leaders volunteered as a result of their responsibility to support their profession. Respondents volunteered because it was something they believed in, it was a source of joy and satisfaction, it was an opportunity to be able to offer their talents, and they believed they owed it to their industry (as cited in Carter & Rudd, 2005). Factors impacting individuals' willingness to volunteer for leadership responsibilities in Farm Bureau included previous

membership in youth organizations (4-H or FFA) along with participation in leadership development programs (Carter and Rudd, 2005)

**Youth leadership development.** In the late 1800's agricultural researchers working to teach farmers about new agricultural discoveries found farmers were not accepting these new discoveries. At this same time, however, researchers discovered that young people were open to experimenting with new ideas and new challenges (National 4-H, 2011). Rural communities supported by agriculture have been the backbone of rural America and family or individual farms represent the majority of production agriculture (Carter & Rudd, 2005). The young people would then share their experiences with their parents and adults. This was the birth of rural youth development programs such as 4-H. 4-H allowed university agricultural researchers to introduce new technologies into the communities through young people. Today 4-H is one of the largest youth development organizations and reaches out to more than six million youth and adults enabling youth to emerge as leaders through the focus of hands-on learning and working alongside adults who volunteer their time to create positive change. Many rural farm youth were members of 4-H during their youth, enrolling in programs to learn about agricultural related topics such as beef and crop production, soils management and natural resources.

Along with 4-H, FFA is another youth organization with strong ties to agriculture in rural areas, especially in its foundation years. Today, both of these programs focus on youth development including leadership development opportunities and efforts to reach out to their communities with projects and programs to improve the lives of citizens. Founded as the Future Farmers of America (FFA) in 1928, the name was shortened to FFA in 1988. The organization's mission is to prepare and educate future generations for

the challenges of feeding a growing population (National FFA Organization, 2011). In 2011, the organization recorded a membership of 523,309 members, who were young men and women ages 12-21 from all 50 states. FFA reaches youth representing all lifestyles with 27% of FFA members living in rural farm areas; 39% live in rural non-farm areas with the remaining 34% of members living in urban and suburban areas. FFA focuses on helping the next generation be prepared to meet the challenges by developing skills and talents in the young people who are members of the organization. Members learn more about being professionals with successful careers and contributions in the areas including training in the area of biology, chemistry, engineering, veterinarians and entrepreneurs.

More than 11,000 FFA advisors and agricultural teachers in the nation's high schools teach agricultural education programs "providing students with innovative and leading-edge education, enabling them to grow into competent leaders" (National FFA Organization, 2011). The need for people with leadership skills is of paramount importance in the coming decades because the baby boomers will retire and take with them leadership skills that have benefitted the workplace (Morgan & Rudd, 2006).

Morgan and Rudd (2006) conducted a study to determine to what extent leadership is being taught in agricultural science classrooms. Students who are taught leadership in high schools were found to be better prepared to act in a leadership capacity because they have had the opportunity to study leadership and understand the phenomena of leadership (Ricketts & Rudd, 2002). Over the past twenty years, research conducted on the influence of participation by high school students in FFA activities found students have an increased perception of leadership skills, however, not all students that enroll in

agricultural science courses also participate in FFA activities (Morgan & Rudd, 2006). As a result, the *LifeKnowledge* curriculum was developed to fill the void of teaching leadership in an agricultural classroom setting and stemmed out of the mission statement of FFA. Of the 167 participants in their study, Morgan and Rudd (2006) found only 52.6% of the agricultural sciences classes lead by the participants offered a leadership course and instructors that had a positive attitude toward leadership were more likely to teach the subject.

Ricketts and Rudd (2004) conducted a study to determine what factors influenced leadership development in individuals who were formerly state FFA officers. The former state officers reported their involvement in FFA and their enrollment in an agricultural education program in high school was most influential in their leadership development. The study results reported “the non-formal leadership educational tool of the FFA program is a strong force in the leadership development of agricultural educational students” (Ricketts and Rudd, 2004, p. 250).

Programs such as 4-H and FFA provide the foundation of teaching young people leadership skills and also how to be the voice of agriculture and communities at the local, state and national level. “Agriculture needs qualified leaders who are willing and able to work on behalf of agriculture, rural communities and their livelihoods” as agriculture in the United States and individual states changes (Carter & Rudd, 2005, p. 484).

### **Beef Industry**

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) reports the structure of the United States cattle industry continues to change, with a greater proportion of cattle being raised on fewer and larger farms (NASS, 2010). The total number of cattle operations in

the United States was 950,000 for 2009, down 1% from 2008. Beef cow operations in 2009, at 753,000 were also down 1% from 2008. During the last 20 years, the number of all cattle operations in the United States has fallen 28%, while beef cow operations have declined by 21% over this time. The average number of cattle per operation has increased by 36% to nearly 100 head on total cattle operations. Cattle operations are getting larger with nearly a 10% increase in operations with more than 500 head of cattle in the last decade. Beef cow operations are also getting larger.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (NASS, 2010), the United States is the world's largest producer of beef. The U.S. cattle industry consists of primarily grain-fed beef consumed both domestically and internationally. The U.S. produced 48.8 billion pounds of red meat in 2007 (AMI, 2010). In 2007 the U.S. Census of Agriculture determined the largest single segment of the U.S. agricultural economy was beef production with 21% of all agricultural receipts attributes to the beef industry. In that same year, meat purchases accounted for 1.7% of disposable personal income and 30% of total food expenditures. Approximately 90% of U.S. beef production by weight is consumed domestically with the remainder exported. United States is the third largest beef exporter in the world behind Brazil and Australia.

Beef in the United States is primarily produced following conventional methods. However, massive enhancements in overall system efficiency have occurred in the past twenty years. NASS (2010) reports cattle and calf inventory numbers are down from 130 million in 1975 to 93.7 million in 2010 yet, high-quality beef and adequate supply continue to be available to consumers. Supply of beef products has not experienced a decline due to industry improvements in genetics, technology such as utilization of

growth implants, optimization of parasite control, mineral supplementation, feedbunk management and management of cow herd re-breeding cycles (Clause, 2010).

Technological developments have increased productivity and efficiency at the producer level (Armbruster et al., 2006).

Cyclical grain and livestock production and foreign trade and disease issues can impact beef production and marketing cycles making it a challenge for producers to remain profitable. Producers have taken an active role to gain a greater understanding of the consumer needs and demands and began the development of value added opportunities. Value-added opportunities include: organic, natural, branded/certified/verified beef production and direct market beef sales—selling directly to the consumer (Clause, 2010). According to NCBA (2010b) as the industry faced a decline in demand and consumption during the 1990s, emphasis on consumer-friendly beef products began to surface at the retail meat counter.

**Beef Industry Structure.** In 1867, the National Grange was organized and is the nation's oldest national agricultural organization. Its membership provides service to agriculture and rural areas and was formed to unite citizens in improving the economic and social position of the nation's farm population. The National Grange focused on issues such as economic development, education and legislation. Grange members are part of a grassroots organization allowing them to effectively express their views and influence legislative policy up to the highest levels of government (National Grange History, 2010). Today's agricultural organizations address many of the same issues and focus on the same membership goals as the initial National Grange organization did.

Other early national agricultural organizations were the Farmer's Union formed in 1902, the first Farm Bureau organization formed in 1911 in Broome County, N.Y., and the formalization of The American Farm Bureau Federation in 1919. From this point forward farm organizations started to set up strong lobbies in Washington, D.C. (Agriculture in the Classroom, n.d.) and today lobbying is still an important role to agricultural organizations. In a study conducted to measure the perception of Texas agricultural commodity board members' perceptions of the 2002 Farm Bill, respondents strongly agreed that their respective organizations influenced the final outcome of the 2002 Farm Bill (Catchings & Wingenbach, 2006). Strength in numbers is important to these organizations and their influence on policy and issues has greater impact as a group rather than an individual (Mathews & Carter, 2010).

The beef industry also created a formalized structure as the early leaders recognized problems and issues could be addressed better by coming together as a group and working in concert with other cattle producers (Ball, 2000). Two attempts to start a national cattle organization failed due to the independent nature of the industry and the producers. Finally, the National Live Stock Association was organized in 1898 and after sustaining several name changes the nation's beef cattle industry is today called the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) (Ball, 2000). Issues facing the beef cattle industry that demanded group cooperation and decision making were: disease control or eradication, development of export markets, restriction of competing imports, continued access to public lands, restrictions on packer monopoly and collusion, limited government help, resistance to government price controls, expanded beef research, and self-help beef promotion (Ball, 2000). Among the great legislative victories for NCBA were the Packers

and Stockyards Act of 1921, the Counter-Cyclical Meat Import Act of 1979, and the Beef Promotion and Research Act of 1985, which authorized the \$1/animal check-off and made nearly \$80 million a year available for beef programs (Ball, 2000).

Modern beef production in the United States is a highly specialized system that spans from cow-calf operators that typically graze pastureland to cattle feedlots focusing on finishing cattle on grain for slaughter (NASS, 2010). Industry organizations such as the NCBA represent cow/calf producers, backgrounders, stockers, feedlots, packers and allied industries such as animal health corporations. Current NCBA membership director Todd Johnson said representation from each of these sectors is present throughout the organization membership and is open and available to any representation of these groups (personal communication, January 8, 2011). The organization consists of volunteer leaders and leaders representing beef industry allied industry or membership organizations. For example, a cow/calf producer from Boise, Idaho can be a member of the organization and fulfill a leadership role on a committee or the board and an employee of Pfizer Animal Health can serve on a committee as a result of representing their company who is an allied industry member.

In the structure of this study, only volunteer leaders in membership beef industry organizations will be interviewed. These volunteer leaders are in leadership roles at county, state and national levels and work alongside paid staff of the organization to carry out the mission of the organization. Volunteer leaders are nominated by their peers to represent the organization at the national level, and a similar process occurs at the local and state levels. Those selected to carry out leader roles do so by volunteering their time to meet the needs of the organization and in many cases, are not reimbursed for their



expenses to attend meetings and functions. Top leadership roles require an immense commitment to the organization and may result in travel over 200 days a year representing the organization as a grassroots producer fulfilling a national leadership role (T. Johnson, personal communication, January 8, 2011).

**Leaders in Beef Industry.** Mathews and Carter (2010) conducted a recent study focusing on the role of leadership in a beef industry organization. The study assessed volunteer leadership in the beef industry, seeking to identify factors that influence the level of involvement of producer members. Interviews were conducted with individuals involved in the cattle industry to identify beef producer perceptions of serving in leadership roles. Themes emerged in six categories such as: organizational involvement, membership and leadership recruitment, costs and benefits of leadership, leadership development, volunteerism, and humility. The study concluded more emphasis should be placed on identifying potential members and/or leaders to take on leadership roles. In addition, the value of participating as a volunteer must be clearly outlined for the volunteer to be willing to devote time and resources towards the organization.

Due to the limited research conducted to study leadership in agricultural organizations and most specifically the beef industry, this study can offer a valuable contribution to the field. The beef industry is a viable economic driver nationwide and not only impacts those in production agricultural but the millions of consumers who rely on the product as a staple in their diet. However, without industry leadership, policy decisions made by an uninformed legislative body could threaten the future of the beef industry. What is learned from this study about today's industry leaders can contribute to the future understanding of leadership in the beef industry.

## Summary

While leadership has been extensively studied in the formal organizational development setting, little is known about leadership in non-formal membership based organizational settings where individuals are volunteer leaders, serving their peers. This study utilizes a qualitative approach to explore the phenomenon of beef industry leaders providing the opportunity to understand industry leadership within the beef industry. This study researched:

1. How do industry leaders characterize industry leadership?
2. How do industry leaders explain the process to become an industry leader?
3. How do industry leaders describe what influenced them to become leaders within the industry?

The results of this study will provide answers to these questions and guide future research on industry leadership. Beef industry organizations along with other agricultural organizations can benefit from a foundation of research to understand leadership in non-formal settings, influences and motivations of volunteer leaders and traits of industry leaders. This literature review revealed the need for this study.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the research approach in this qualitative research study. Qualitative studies are utilized when the purpose is to learn from the participants and the participants' experience and how they interpret the experience (Richards & Morse, 2007). The intent of the study is to describe beef industry leaders and the characteristics and styles of leadership they represent.

#### **Rationale for Qualitative Research Design**

A qualitative research approach is used when the researcher identifies a problem that calls for exploration. "Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). Plano-Clark and Creswell (2010) describe qualitative studies are selected when the researcher relies on the views of the participants and gathers data from the participants through broad, general questions and the data are collected in the form of words which are later analyzed to determine themes. Qualitative studies are used by researchers who aim to gather research in a natural setting and it is the researcher who collects the data. Inductive data analysis process occurs in qualitative studies meaning that data is collected and the researcher goes back and forth between the themes until they establish a comprehensive set of themes (Creswell, 2007).

If the purpose of the study is to understand a phenomena in more detail a qualitative methodology should be used because it will allow for further exploration of

the problem of which very little is known (Creswell, 2007; Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010; Richards & Morse 2007). This study will explore the phenomena of beef industry leaders and describe what brings a person to the role of leadership within a beef industry membership organization. All participants in the study will have the commonality of the central phenomenon.

The overall focus of a qualitative study is to learn from the participants because important variables are unknown (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010). During data collection the researcher's goal is to empower the individuals to share their stories. This can be accomplished through the use of open-ended questions. In a qualitative study, questions may be altered during the interview process to reflect an increased understanding of the problem. Because the researcher is gathering the data, the researcher interprets what they see, hear and understand. This can make it difficult for the researcher to separate themselves from the research and the researcher's bias may be infused in the research as a result (Creswell, 2007).

### **Rational for Type of Qualitative Design – Phenomenological**

Creswell (2007) describes five qualitative study traditions. These are: narrative, grounded theory, case study, ethnography and phenomenological (see Table 6). A phenomenological approach is taken when all participants have shared a common experience of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007) and when the researcher is seeking questions about meaning (Richards & Morse, 2007). Phenomenological studies began in the early 20th century by Edmund Husserl, and took on the perspective that a phenomenon can only be perceived by those who experience it (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010).

Table 6

*Characteristics of Five Qualitative Approaches*

Type	Attributes of Approach	
	Focus	Units of Analysis
Narrative Research	Exploring the life of an individual	Studying one or more individuals
Phenomenology	Understanding the essence of the experience	Studying several individuals who have shared the experience
Case Study	Developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases	Studying an event, a program, an activity, more than one individual
Ethnography	Describing and interpreting a culture sharing group	Studying a group that shares the same culture
Grounded Theory	Developing a theory grounded in data from the field	Studying a process, action, or interaction involving many individuals

Source: Creswell (2007, p. 78)

Because the purpose of this study is to understand the common experiences of beef industry leaders, a phenomenological methodology was chosen. As a result of the study, the researcher will be able to gain insight into why the participants have assumed or taken on roles as beef industry leaders. All participants will have a common, lived experience (Creswell, 2007) as being a leader in the beef industry. In addition, in an effort to fit the question to be asked to the method, a phenomenological study asks the question, “What is the meaning of . . . ?” with the focus on the essence of the phenomena or experiences (Richards & Morse, 2007). This study is seeking to gain a greater understanding of the meaning of leadership and what brings people to leadership roles, therefore the best fit of a method of qualitative study is the phenomenological method. Moustakas (1994) also identified two questions to determine if a study would best fit the

phenomenological model by asking: (a) what have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon, and (b) what contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?

Important in phenomenological studies is the opportunity for the researcher to be able to gather the data in the voice of the participants to describe the central phenomena. Through the central phenomenon the researcher will seek to explain and understand, what is industry leadership to beef industry leaders?

Phenomenology describes the meaning of experiences lived by several individuals and seeks to understand the essence of that experience (Hatch, 2002). Key characteristics of a phenomenological research study include: (a) the researcher's purpose is to determine the essence of a single phenomenon; (b) the researcher sets aside their own experience with the phenomenon and focuses on collecting data from people who have experienced it; (c) the researcher analyzes significant statements and meaning about the phenomenon, and (d) the researcher reports themes and what is experienced and how it is experienced (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010).

Creswell (2007) refers to two primary types of phenomenological studies, van Manen's (1997) hermeneutical phenomenological study and Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological study. van Manen (1997) defined a hermeneutical phenomenological study as one where the focus is of learned experiences and the researcher first identifies a concern and then makes an interpretation. Richards and Morse (2007) refer to van Manen's (2006) more recent definition of transcendental phenomenology as "explores the way knowledge comes into being, and knowledge is based on insights rather than objective characteristics, which constitutes meaning" (p.

48). Moustakas (1994) defines a transcendental phenomenological study as one where the focus is on the participants and the researcher sets aside their experiences. The researcher brackets out experiences, reduces information to significant statements or quotes and combines these statements into themes. Because the focus is on learning from the participants and the goal is learning from the central phenomenon and creating themes from the data collected, this study most closely aligns with Moustakas's (1994) transcendental format of a study.

This qualitative study used phenomenological methodology because the purpose of the study is to identify what is common among the beef industry leaders in regard to their role as peer leaders in the beef industry. This study will collect information about, and describe the aspects of, the experiences of these beef industry leaders, all of which have experienced the same phenomenon — being a beef industry leader. This study will identify more about the essence of the phenomenon as it is experienced by the individuals that are interviewed. The “lived experience is critical to phenomenology” and “existence as being in the world” are two assumptions that underlie phenomenology (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 49).

### **Approval**

Approval from a formal application to the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln occurred on February 21, 2011. A copy of the official notice of IRB approval is located in Appendix A. Selection of participants began immediately after approval.

## **Research Questions**

Phenomenological studies focus on asking only a few broad general questions to focus on learning from the participants who have been identified to have a common experience (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010). Questions are focused on what has the participant experienced in terms of the phenomenon and what has influenced or affected their experiences of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell (2007) recommends one central question with multiple sub-questions. The following central question and sub-questions were developed for the researcher to explore the role of leadership in the beef industry:

### **Central Question.**

What is industry leadership to beef industry leaders?

### **Sub-questions.**

1. How do industry leaders characterize industry leadership?
2. How do industry leaders explain the process to become an industry leader?
3. How do industry leaders describe what influenced them to become leaders within the industry?

Additional probing questions were used as needed.

## **Type and Size of Sample**

Determination of sample size is important as an additional strategy to formulate a successful qualitative study. Guidelines for a researcher to consider are: (a) the selection of a few individuals allows for a more in-depth picture of the phenomenon which will diminish with the addition of more and more individuals studied; (b) because of the need to report details about each of the individuals, too many cases become burdensome and



can result in superficial perspectives; and (c) the type of qualitative study can dictate the number of the individuals to consider in a sample size (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010).

In Richards and Morse's (2007) *User's Guide to Qualitative Methods*, reference is made to phenomenological study participants ranging from six to 10 per group and Creswell (2007) refers to studies ranging in sizes of participants from one to 325. Creswell references Dukes' (1984) recommends studying three to 10 participants, Riemen's (1986) suggestion of 10 individuals and Polkinghorne's (1989) recommendation for researchers to interview five to 25 individuals (as cited in Creswell, 2007). Taking these resources into consideration this study will interview 12 participants. This small, yet manageable group size, will not result in over generalization of information (Creswell, 2007)

In this qualitative study, the researcher intentionally selected individuals and sites instead of selecting them randomly which is common to quantitative inquiry studies. This intended selection of sites is called purposeful sampling (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010). The selection is based on the participants or sites being information rich. This is important to qualitative research because it demonstrates that the researcher has worked to identify the best sites and participants in the process of learning more about the central phenomenon. Through selected sites or people, the researcher gains the ability to get a greater understanding of the phenomenon to be studied. Since the goal of qualitative research is to create community among those who have a common experience, the qualitative researcher has the ability to intentionally select individuals and sites (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010). More narrow range of sampling is accepted in

phenomenological studies because it is imperative that all participants are similar enough that they all have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007).

Several different strategies to implementing purposeful sampling can occur (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010), each with different intent and characteristics. The researcher has the ability to select which strategy of purposeful sampling is best suited for the study. Both homogenous sampling and maximal variation sampling were conducted in this study (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010).

First, the participants were selected based on homogenous sampling. Creswell (2008) states, “in homogenous sampling the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics” (p. 216). For this research study, the researcher selected participants who are of similar type, meaning the participants were leaders in a beef industry membership organization. The researcher will identify individuals who are visibly active volunteer leaders in the beef cattle industry membership organizations with a focus on those active at the national level. Selected leaders will currently be involved in leadership roles of beef cattle industry groups such as the NCBA or seedstock beef cattle organizations such as the American Angus Association (AAA), American Hereford Association (AHA), etc. The number of leadership roles they participate in will not be a determining factor in the selection of the interview participants, however they must be active on at least one committee or board. If they are a member of several committees or boards or possibly on more than one committee or board at different levels (local, state or region) or with different beef industry leadership organizations at the same time, this will not influence the selection decision. For example, they may be a committee member of the membership

committee for the NCBA while sit on the board of directors of the AAA and a committee member of their state cattlemen's group. However, their activeness on more than one board does not play into their selection as a participant in the study. The overall selection was focused on the participant being active in at least one leadership role and that will create the similarity across all participants.

In addition, maximal variation sampling, one of the most popular approaches in qualitative studies, will be utilized in the study. Creswell (2007) states, "the maximum variation approach consists of determining in advance some criteria to differentiate the sites or participants" (p. 126). Important to the study, this method increases the likelihood that the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives and both of these components are important in qualitative research design (Creswell, 2007). From the group of leaders selected through homogenous sampling, the researcher sought to identify leaders who varied in age, gender and geographical location and sector of the industry (e.g: seedstock; commercial cow/calf; backgrounder/stocker or feedlot). The study will aim to identify a balance of gender so that there is a representation of both male and females participating in the study, although taking into consideration the dominance of men in the agricultural field there is great likelihood that more males will be interviewed than females. This variation in characteristic may identify additional rich information about leaders based on their age or gender within the subgroup of beef industry leaders. There may or may not be differences based on their geographical location and sector of the industry they represent. This study only considered volunteer leaders who represent the production sector of the cattle industry, not the packing industry or allied industry due

to the fact they may have experienced leadership differently than those active in the membership organization structure as a volunteer.

### **Data Collection and Research Site**

Qualitative studies in general focus on broad questions to participants in efforts to gather data. Participant views are relatively unconstrained by the researcher as the participants are allowed to share their views in their responses to questions and the researcher spends extensive time with the participant to gather the extensive data (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010). Data collected for phenomenological studies usually consist of in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2007) of open-ended questions. Open-ended questions allow the participants to create their own options for responding and provide the opportunity for the participants to share detailed personal information. The format of the data collection is recording and then transcription which allows for the capturing of all information (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010).

Often research is gathered at the site where people engage in the phenomenon and in locations that are convenient to the participants and the researcher. However, due to the topic of this study —leadership within state and national beef organizations — conducting the interviews at one site was not possible. This would have meant conducting the interviews at national beef cattle industry meetings where these leaders most likely would be attending. This would not be a feasible option or convenient to the participants because it is at these national meetings when the participants are busy fulfilling their leadership roles.

As a result of the geographical limitations presented in this study, interviews were conducted via telephone and allowed for the participant and researcher to determine a

time of the day, day of the week, that was convenient. “Telephone interviews provide the best source of information in cases where the researcher does not have direct access to the individuals” (Creswell, 2007, p. 133). Conducting the interviews over the phone allowed the participants to be comfortable in their setting, and also provided for suitable interaction between the researcher and the participant.

Qualitative studies are often known for data which is collected from multiple forms of data (Creswell, 2007). However, phenomenological studies allow for the focus of data collection through interviews only (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010; Richards & Morse, 2007). Therefore telephone interviews with unstructured open-ended questions were used to elicit broad responses from the participants. Due to the selection of participants from across the nation, it was not possible for the researcher to conduct face-to-face interviews. One of the challenges presented with a telephone interview is the lack of the ability of the researcher to observe the expressions and behavior of the participant during the interview. However, emphasis on words can still be noted as well as other indicators of expression such as laughter or strong expression of a word. The interviews were audio recorded, with agreement from the participants (see Consent Form, Appendix B) so the telephone interviews could later be transcribed. Interviews were conducted at various times of the day and days of the week, whatever time was determined to be convenient for both the researcher and the participants. Participants chose what location to take the phone call and this was primarily their home or their business office.

Participants were invited to take part in the research study via an initial email letter (Appendix C) explaining the project and then a follow-up phone call or email to

determine their acceptance to participate. An email was used as the initial contact for recruiting participants and was chosen as the first step, because the email allowed participants the opportunity to decline participation without feeling committed to the project. After the participant indicated their willingness to partake in the interview process, the researcher had planned to follow up with a telephone script to schedule the interview (Appendix D). Yet, in nearly every case, correspondence by email to set up the interview time was preferred on the part of the participant so time, date and any other final details were finalized by a short email. Once the time and date were set for the telephone interview, the researcher sent a reminder notice, the consent form and the interview questions to each of the participants 48 hours before the interview. The participants were asked to sign the consent form and fax the form back to the researcher (Appendix B). The researcher also reviewed the consent form prior to conducting the interview to make sure the participant did not have any final questions about the project. All participants returned the consent form.

The interviews were transcribed for coding. Additional notes taken during the interviews were also documented. The process of transcription serves as a measure of validity and a method of analysis (Creswell, 2007). Collection of data occurred between February 27 and March 10, 2011.

Important to the qualitative interview process is the construction of an Interview Protocol Form (Appendix F) which contains instructions for the process of the interview (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010) and consists of questions narrowing the central question and sub-questions (Creswell, 2007). The interview protocol includes an introduction to the research study, an overview of the project, a review of the informed consent form and

closing comments (Creswell, 2007) and guides the interview on behalf of the researcher to ensure consistency from one interview to the next. The researcher developed an interview protocol to address the previously identified research questions. A time frame of 45 minutes per interview was the goal. Unique to qualitative research the researcher is given the opportunity to ask additional questions or probing questions if needed. The researcher's personal bias may be reflected in additional questions (Creswell, 2007)

Six open-ended questions (Richards & Morse, 2007) were the basis of the qualitative interview. Although prior, focused questions are helpful in setting up an interview the goal of a qualitative phenomenological study is to hear the participant's story. If the researcher feels they have not learned enough about the story then additional questions called probes can be asked or a second interview conducted (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010; Richards & Morse, 2007). Probing is useful to clarify an answer. Probes are often developed ahead of time to provide consistency in the interviews but can also occur unplanned and spontaneously (Creswell, 2007).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis of qualitative studies focuses on developing a general sense of the data, coding it for description and themes and then composing the findings that describe what was learned about the central phenomenon. Qualitative research allows for interpretive inquiry. The researcher has the ability to interpret what they see, hear and understand (Creswell, 2007). The transcriptions are detailed information taken from a generalized form of themes to create a larger picture of the data collected. Unique to qualitative data is the opportunity for the researcher to collect and analyze the data simultaneously (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010). This is referred to as holistic account

(Creswell, 2007) because the qualitative researcher is setting out to identify a complex picture of the problem or issue that is being studied. The researcher's goal is to "identify the complex interactions of factors in any situation" (Creswell 2007, p. 39).

After completion of each interview audio tape files were uploaded to a professional transcriber to be transcribed verbatim. Additional notes taken during the interview were documented on the Interview Protocol Form (Appendix F). Notes were made by the researcher as a reminder of key points made during the interview. In order to ensure the research study participants' right to privacy, the transcriptionists agreed to maintain the confidentiality of the interviews and they were asked to complete the Transcription Confidentiality Form (Appendix G). All study participants were given the opportunity to review the completed transcripts if they preferred to do so (Appendix H). This provided the participants the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the data collected (e.g., spellings, acronyms used) and confirmed the participant's validity of the data. Only two of the participants asked to review the transcripts. One of the participants returned the transcript with some minor spelling and acronym corrections. The other participant did not respond with any changes.

Moustakas (1994) and Polkinghorne (1989), who are known for their work in phenomenology, agree on the methods for data analysis of a phenomenological study. Steps include analyzing the data from the interview transcripts and highlighting important or significant statements, which may also include quotes that will help the researcher in their task of gaining a greater understanding of how participants experienced the phenomenon (as cited in Creswell, 2007). Moustakas (1994) describes this first step in data analysis as horizontalization. Secondly, the researcher developed what Moustakas



(1994) refers to as clusters of meaning from the significant statements which then create the basis for the development of themes. Creswell (2007) explains,

these significant statements and themes are then used to write a description of what the participants experienced (textural description). They are also used to write a description of the context or setting that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon, called imaginative variation or structural description. (p. 159).

Although Moustakas (1994) supports additional steps where the researcher writes about their own experiences, Creswell (2007) supports that this should be done in personal statements at the beginning of the phenomenology or the researcher should include these personal statements in their discussion of the methods. Creswell (2007) adopted the phenomenological analysis and representation in Table 7 from the work conducted by Moustakas (1994). As part of the analysis, the researcher offers a full description of his/her own experience of the phenomenon as an attempt to set aside the researcher's personal experiences and allows the focus to be directed to the participants. Moustakas (1994) defines epoche as "a process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions and allowing all things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look to see them again, as if for the first time" (p. 85).

Finally, in the data analysis based on the structural and textural descriptions, the researcher developed a summary or composite description called the essential, invariant structure. This summary provides the essence of the phenomenon studies and the results from the interviews. "The final step of analysis is the 'essence' which represents the culminating aspect of the phenomenological study" (Creswell, 2007. p. 159) explaining what the participants experienced and how they experienced it.

Table 7

*Data Analysis and Representation for Phenomenological Study*

	Representation
Data managing	Create and organize files for data
Reading, memoing	Read through text, make margin notes form initial codes
Describing	Describe personal experiences through epoche Describe the essence of the phenomenon
Classifying	Develop significant statements Group statements into meaning units
Interpreting	Develop a textural description “What happened” Develop a structural description “How the phenomenon was experienced” Develop the essence
Representing, Visualizing	Present narration of the essence of the experience; in tables, figures or discussion

Source: Creswell (2007, p. 156-157 and p. 61-62)

The researcher read the data several times conducting an analysis during each reading to gain a greater understanding of the information collected. The researcher began to make interpretations of the data into codes and themes representative from the data collected. Qualitative data analysis consists of a rigorous and systematic process to gain an understanding about the central phenomenon (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010). Winnowing of the data will occur (Wolcott, 1994), as often information during the interview process may be found to not be relevant to the qualitative study (as cited in Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) has found lean coding to be most helpful during the data analysis process and determined focusing on five or six categories to create the five or six themes in the final narrative to be the most useful.

Coding software (MAXqda) was used to take the transcriptions and also identify themes. MAXqda is a qualitative data analysis computer software program which can assist in coding the data (Creswell, 2007). However, before the transcriptions were processed through the MAXqda software program, the researcher performed a preliminary analysis of the data. “Exploring the data to obtain a general sense of the data” (Creswell, 2008, p. 251) is an important step in the analysis process.

Steps taken to analyze the data followed those outlined in Table 4. Participant names were changed to pseudonyms and any information which could identify the research study participant was removed or altered to be unidentifiable. The MAXqda allowed the researcher to conduct initial coding, highlight quotes and provide a rich, thick description of the research study participant responses (Creswell, 2007). The next step was to identify patterns and themes from the codes and quotes. In rich, thick descriptions, the writer describes in detail the participants and the setting to communicate the findings of the research study and delve deeper into the issues. These detailed descriptions allow the reader to “transfer information to other settings” (Erlandson et al., 1993, as cited in Creswell, 2007) and provide the researcher with a new perspective (Creswell, 2008).

### **Validation of Results**

Findings and interpretations of data collection and analysis should include validations (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010). Qualitative studies are interpretive and are not concerned with objectivity of the data as in the case of quantitative studies.

Qualitative researchers are striving for “understanding that deep structure of knowledge that comes from visiting personally with participants” (Creswell, 2007, p. 201) and this can present challenges in validation and evaluation.

Creswell (2007) identified eight strategies frequently used in qualitative studies. These include: (a) prolonged engagement and persistent observation, (b) triangulation, (c) peer review or debriefing, (d) refining working hypotheses, (e) clarifying researcher bias, (f) member checking, (g) rich-thick description, and (h) external audits. Creswell (2007) recommends researchers use at least two of these given validation measures. In this study, the researcher will conduct clarifying researcher bias, member-checking and using rich, thick descriptions.

The researcher conducted member checking of the data to validate the results. Member checking is considered to be “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314, in Creswell, 2007, p. 208). Member checking involves “taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). All participants were provided the opportunity to review the transcripts for validity and credibility and asked to make changes or add information. Two of the participants requested to see the transcript from their interview, the remaining ten participants chose not to review the transcripts. Of the two who reviewed the transcripts one of the participants contacted the researcher with corrections in spellings and acronyms, the second participant did not indicate any needed changes. The format of this study did not allow for the participants to be able to review the other existing data and analyses without breaching confidentiality of the data.

Moustakas’ (1994) approach to phenomenological methods focuses more on the description of the lived experiences and less on the interpretation of those lived experiences. However, it is important for those reading the study “to understand the

researcher's position and any biases or assumptions that impact the inquiry" (Merriam, 1988, p. 208, in Creswell, 2007). More specifically, in phenomenological research the researcher brackets all prior knowledge about the topic (Richards & Morse, 2007). This is done by writing assumptions, knowledge and expectations. "The researcher should enter the conversation with the participants, with no presuppositions" (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 51). Due to the researcher's strong interest in the phenomenon, the role of the researcher was identified and experiences bracketed to limit personal bias during the study.

The third method of validation used in this study was rich, thick descriptions. Detailed descriptions of the responses to the questions from the participants were provided in the findings which enabled the reader the ability to transfer the information to other settings. Direct quotes of many of the participants were included in the findings providing rich, thick descriptions of their thoughts on the central phenomenon.

### **Researcher's Role**

The researcher selected this topic of study for her dissertation at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln because of her great interest in the beef cattle industry and a desire for a successful future for the industry. The researcher was raised in the beef cattle industry, studied agriculture in college with a bachelors and masters degree with emphasis on the beef industry and has worked professionally in the industry for twenty years. Her professional career has focused on education, promotion and communications to enhance the viability of the beef industry in roles such as an Extension educator, editor of national livestock publications and promotion of agricultural products.

Moustakas (1994) recommends a researcher of a qualitative study conduct bracketing to set aside one's own biases, judgments and interpretations. The researcher should conduct bracketing to minimize bias of their own experiences in the project to maintain a fresh perspective on the central phenomenon. The researcher worked to put her experiences and knowledge of the industry aside, to be as free as possible of bias. Although the researcher is actively involved in the beef industry, the researcher worked to focus on the interview protocol and asked pre-determined probing questions unless the case occurred where clarification of a statement from the participant was needed. It is a difficult task to employ self-management and reduction of one's bias when the researcher is so closely associated with the subject matter. However, interest and passion for the industry inspired the researcher to conduct this study and therefore the researcher was motivated to reduce bias. Rather the researcher focused on listening closely with curiosity and interest to the answers tries to put aside any prior presumptions.

Due to her professional and personal affiliation with the beef industry the researcher is actively involved in serving the industry. The researcher has networked with many industry leaders (staff and volunteer) in the development of programs and direction to lead the industry forward. Therefore, the researcher has great interest in seeing the industry succeed and remain viable and the researcher realizes this must come from both formal and in-formal leadership entities. With the important role volunteer peer leaders have in the beef industry, the researcher found it important to focus this study on gaining a greater understanding of leadership within the beef industry. The opportunity to conduct foundational research to shape the topic of in-formal beef industry leadership and learn what brings people to leadership roles sparked the researcher to conduct this study.

With the researcher's many years of active experience and profession in the beef cattle industry, it is not expected that the researcher will have some acquaintance with one or more of the interviewees. However, as a result of the researcher's current geographical location and career based in Nebraska, the researcher has chosen to focus on active leaders who reside outside of Nebraska to again reduce the opportunity of bias or unintended interpretations of the data.

### **Ethical Issues**

Ethical issues were limited in this research study. Guidelines suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2003) were followed by the researcher throughout the process of the study. Data will remain confidential and research study participants will be protected by confidentiality. Steps were taken throughout the project to ensure these two key issues were conducted.

The University of Nebraska – Lincoln's Institutional Review Board (IRB) guides specific protocol of research studies conducted by studies to reassure ethical management of this study. All aspects of the study were reported and approved by the IRB prior to the start of data collection. Research participants were given the opportunity to accept participation in the study by signing the Informed Consent Form (Appendix B). This letter confirms their participation and outlined the ethical steps taken to protect their identity and responses. Participants were aware they were participating in a research study and the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants (Creswell, 2007). Participants were made aware that information obtained from the interviews is for the benefit of a University dissertation project and that results of this dissertation will be published in academic journals or presented at research meetings in the future.

Pseudonyms were used for each of the interviewees to protect their identities and prevent any connection to their information that would allow readers to identify the participants. Audio recordings will be deleted once the project is completed and approved by the researcher's committee. Transcriptions will remain in the control of the researcher during the process of the study and writing of the dissertation. However, at the completion of the dissertation requirements, transcriptions will be destroyed.

To ensure the researcher correctly gathered the information during the telephone interviews, each of the participants will be given the opportunity to review the transcripts. Only information which was recorded on the audio-tape or used to develop themes will be used to develop the statement of findings.

### **Summary**

Chapter three discussed the steps taken in this phenomenological research study to gather research data following steps outlined for qualitative research studies and to focus on the "experience" of the participants to identify the findings and conclusions to the research questions.



## **Chapter Four**

### **Findings**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore beef industry leaders in formal positions of industry membership organizations. As a result, the researcher gained a new perspective on why people become leaders in their respective membership organizations and what can be learned from their role as a leader as well as their view of leaders and leadership. The central question was, “What is industry leadership to beef industry leaders?” Three research sub-questions also guided the study:

1. How do industry leaders characterize industry leadership?
2. How do industry leaders explain the process to become an industry leader?
3. How do industry leaders describe what influenced them to become leaders within the industry?

#### **Overview of Participants**

Twelve beef industry leaders who are active in their local, state or national membership organizations—with an emphasis on being active at the national level—participated in the study. A table listing the participants of the purposeful sample was developed in Table 8. Of the 12 participants, nine were male and three were female and they represented 11 different states. There were two seedstock industry representatives, four from the cow/calf segment of the industry, two representing the backgrounder/stocker industry and four feedlot segment representatives. Strong emphasis was placed on selecting leaders who make their livelihood primarily from the beef cattle industry and are actively involved in production agriculture. Eleven of the participants

matched the selection criteria. One participant indicated that in addition to the family's ranching business, they are employed in a full-time position in the field of agriculture/livestock production. Of those individuals initially invited to take part in the research study only one person denied participation. The candidate did not indicate specifically why this was the case. It was assumed by the researcher to be the result of the time commitment. The final 12 individuals, who agreed to be a study participant, were all willing to assist with the project and several commented on their interest to see the results and their interest in the topic.

Telephone interviews were conducted due to participant representation from across the country. The interviews averaged 45 minutes in length, were audio-taped and conducted via telephone. All participants were asked the same six questions and many were asked pre-determined probing questions or additional questions to clarify a point.

### **Profiles of Participants**

A brief introduction to each of the participants is provided.

**Jeff.** Jeff is a 50 year-old, Midwestern small feedlot owner who started the operation after returning from college where he gained a bachelor's of science degree in agriculture from his home state land-grant institution. His family has deep roots in agriculture conducting both farming and livestock practices since the 1950s. During his youth, Jeff was a member of 4-H and FFA organizations. Today the family-owned operation consists of feeding out cattle and marketing the finished animal to regional packers. Jeff has been active in his state cattlemen's association and most recently has taken on leadership roles at the national level as both a committee member and committee chairman.

Table 8

*Demographics of the Twelve Interview Participants for the Study*

No.	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Level of Education	Location	Beef Sector
1	Jeff	M	50	Bachelor's of Science	Midwest	Feedlot
2	Matt	M	40	Bachelor's of Science	Southeast	Cow/Calf
3	Dale	M	61	Bachelor's of Science	Northern Plains	Seedstock
4	Robert	M	60	Bachelor's of Science	Midwest	Feedlot
5	Kim	F	46	Bachelor's of Science	Midwest	Cow/Calf
6	Cindy	F	47	Master's of Science	Midwest	Cow/Calf
7	Ben	M	64	Bachelor's of Arts	Southwest	Feedlot
8	Tom	M	65	Some college	Southeast	Stocker
9	Allen	M	45	Bachelor's of Science	Southeast	Seedstock
10	Liz	F	56	Bachelor's of Science plus a one year specialized agriculture program	Southwest	Stocker and Cow/Calf
11	Brett	M	44	Bachelor's of Arts	Northwest	Feedlot
12	Henry	M	55	Bachelor's of Science	Southwest	Cow/Calf

**Matt.** Matt is a commercial cow/calf operator in the Southeastern United States, who has great pride in caring for his cattle and the land. As a result he believes in sharing his pride for the cattle industry by visiting with people from his community, state and region and making sure they are aware of the importance of agriculture to their region. Matt first got involved in leadership roles at the county level and then as a regional representative to his state organization and even rose to the rank of president of his state cattlemen's organization. Currently he is sharing his knowledge at the national level.

Matt has a bachelor's of science degree from a regional college and is currently 40 years old.

**Dale.** Dale is a large seedstock operator in the Northern Plains region. After graduation at the state's land-grant institution with an agricultural degree, Dale returned to the ranch to focus on production agriculture. For many years, he worked in the family operation focusing on raising seedstock and marketing genetics. He gradually began to take on leadership roles within organizations serving on state committees and boards and also representing his breed on the national board of directors. He saw the need to be a spokesman for the industry and has taken on the responsibility of educating those in agriculture and those outside of agriculture. Dale's operation has been in the family since the early 1900's with Dale being the third generation and his son now also involved in the operation to be the fourth generation to ranch. Dale is currently 61 years old and spent four years in the ROTC and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant.

**Robert.** Robert has spent his life working in the cattle feeding industry and conducting general manager duties overseeing several large cattle feeding yards all owned by one single ownership. He graduated with a bachelor's of science degree from a four-year land grant institution. He worked seven years in the industry for a cattle marketing organization before starting his 28-plus-year career in cattle feeding management. His current duties include overseeing daily operations of the feedyards which includes: management, banking and finance issues; compliance with state and federal permits; and working with customer procurement. Intrigued by policy and political issues facing the beef cattle industry Robert started getting involved in membership organizations and has served in a number of leadership roles from state

committees, to state president and now is active on national beef industry committees and boards. Robert is a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the Army Reserves and his state's National Guard. He is currently 61-years old.

**Ben.** Ben has worked in the cattle feeding industry for more than 25 years but was not raised in the industry. After some time in the military and a degree in Mathematics, Ben was introduced to the cattle feeding business and was intrigued enough to join the staff at a feedyard. After working at several levels and in several positions for feedyards, Ben was able to apply much of what he had learned in the military and in his college training to the finance, marketing and overall management aspect of the cattle feeding business, which resulted in a very successful career in management of some of the industry's large feedyards. At 65 years old, Ben is still active in the cattle feeding industry as a partner in several feedyards and conducting the role of chief executive officer. Always one who enjoyed being involved and speaking to the issues, he started to get active in committees at the state and national level fulfilling roles such as co-chair and then chairman of a national committee.

**Kim.** Kim's love for the cattle industry and its lifestyle encouraged her and her family to start in the beef cattle business when Kim graduated from college with a bachelor's of science degree in animal science. As a mid-sized Midwestern commercial cow/calf producer who also has a herd of registered cattle, Kim, who is 46-years old, takes on the challenges to improve her operation and market her cattle with the best tools and programs available. Kim conducts the overall management and day-to-day operations of the ranch such as financial management, planning and the vast array of other duties it takes to run a family ranch. Understanding the importance of being a spokesperson for

the industry, being able to speak up about the issues and help to clarify any misconceptions, Kim started increasing her participation at events, meetings and joining committees. Today, she is active on one of the primary state committees for her state association and recently started her leadership contribution at the national level.

**Cindy.** Growing up on a ranch in the northern plains and marrying a rancher, Cindy has always had a love for the cattle industry and been very involved in the day-to-day operations and functions to build a successful ranch. Cindy also works off the ranch in an agriculture-based career, which has allowed Cindy to gain additional knowledge that directly impacts the decisions made in the management of the ranch and in her role as a beef industry leader for her state cattlemen's organization. The family ranch consists of commercial cow-calf operation and several diversified projects to provide additional income to the operation and best utilize the resources and opportunities available. Cindy's children will be the fourth generation on the ranch. As a result of the wealth of knowledge built from both her career and her ranch ownership, Cindy, now 47-years-old started moving into roles on committees and boards and has also filled top leadership roles at the state level.

**Tom.** Tom is a 65-year-old cattle producer from the Southeastern United States. Tom's operation is a backgrounding business that feeds market cattle to a certain weight before they are sold to feedyards to be finished for harvest. Tom and his wife have operated their backgrounding business for 40 years and live on the farm where Tom was raised. The farm has always been dedicated to raising cattle and agriculture. Tom has spent his entire life in the cattle business. His interest and love for the industry has encouraged his involvement along with his goal to do what he could to make the industry

better. Tom was part of one of the early leadership classes organized in his state for agricultural leaders. Tom has served in roles such as president of his state cattlemen's organization and for six years served on national committees representing the industry.

**Allen.** Allen is a first generation cattle producer who focuses on raising seedstock genetics but also has a commercial cow-calf operation in the southeast region of the country. The 45-year-old cattleman got interested in the cattle business in high school and from visiting his grandparent's farm. After graduating from college with a bachelor's of science degree working in the ranching industry for seven years, Allen and his wife started their own family operation. At a young age Allen started to move into leadership roles at the local and state level and now represents his seedstock industry on the national membership organization board of directors. Also active in leadership roles in his local community, Allen believes it's important to contribute at all levels and especially in the local area.

**Liz.** Liz graduated with a bachelor's of science degree in animal science and went on to study Ranch management knowing that she would be very involved in the family's ranching operation in the future. Today at 56 years old, Liz manages a large commercial cow/calf and stocker operation in the southwest. Liz comes from a family deeply rooted in ranching raising both cattle and horses. Liz serves as the ranch manager and oversees all the ranch staff and daily management. Understanding the importance of agriculture and the ranching industry to her livelihood and the impact of their cattle business, Liz believed in 'stepping up to the plate' to support and represent the industry. She has worked to support her local and state cattlemen's organization even taking on the top leadership role as president of the state organization. In addition, she has assisted on

committees at the national level and participated in other beef cattle industry groups and organizations to provide leadership and support.

**Brett.** After graduating from college, with a bachelor's of arts degree in business administration, Brett returned home to assist with the family's cattle feeding operation in the Northeastern region of the country. Today he is general manager overseeing all daily operations such as managing the staff, cattle procurement, risk-management and marketing. Seeking to learn more about the business and how the business may impact Brett's cattle feeding operation, he started to get involved in local and state committees and organizations. He has filled roles such as serving on the officer team of his state cattlemen's organization including the role of president, and has represented his state on committees and the board of directors for the NCBA. At 44 years old Brett has expressed much interest in providing support to represent and be a voice for his industry.

**Henry.** Henry and his wife run a large commercial cow-calf operation on land that was previously acquired by his wife's family in the early 1900s. Based in the Southwestern region the ranch consists of state, private and federal land. Henry's operation also consists of a replacement heifer program and a seedstock program. Henry has a bachelor's of science degree in agriculture and grew up ranching in the Western states prior to moving to the Southwest. Henry has been very active in committees that are directly related to the resources that impact his ranching business. He took on leadership roles at the state level and then moved on to committees to represent these issues at the national level. Henry is 55 years old.



## Identifying Themes

In the process to identify themes, the researcher read through the twelve verbatim transcripts several times to obtain an overall feeling for the data. Significant phrases and sentences were identified. These were phrases and sentences that pertained directly to the central phenomenon. The researcher coded the transcripts to formulate meanings and cluster together common themes. All the themes were in vivo — directly from the interviews of the participants. The transcripts were also analyzed using the software program MAXqda. From the hand-coding for themes and the integration of the software analysis, the researcher was able to incorporate the results into an in-depth description of the phenomenon.

Seven primary themes were identified from the analysis conducted by the researcher (see Table 9). The themes are: (a) The world is run by those who show up; (b) Represent what is best for the industry; (c) Be willing to carry the bucket of water; (d) Gained while giving; (e) Have innate leadership abilities; (f) A natural progression; and (g) Selected by your peers.

The first theme, *The world is run by those who show up* was a popular statement among the participants as many recalled hearing this statement at meetings they attended over the years. This statement summarized to them that you can't be a leader if you don't show up, or you can't have a say in the future of the beef industry if your voice is not heard. Those who show up are willing to serve, volunteer, get active and be dedicated to the future of the industry.

Table 9

*Themes, Meaning Units and Supporting Quotes from Twelve Qualitative Interviews*

Theme	Quotes Supporting Theme
<p><b><i>The world is run by those who show up</i></b></p> <p><u>Meaning Units:</u></p> <p>Showing up</p> <p>Willingness to serve</p> <p>Giving of time</p> <p>Being dependable</p> <p>Dedication</p>	<p>It's those people, you know, not only with the interest and the dedication, but those who show up and are willing to commit the time that it takes to be involved with these volunteer organizations.</p> <p>The number one thing is, is showing up, is going to the meetings and being involved.</p> <p>I think that we all owe service, so I feel like as long as I'm involved in this industry, which I hope is a lifetime, I hope that in some way that I can always give back, to this industry in . . . in some fashion.</p> <p>I think first of all it (leadership) is a desire to help in any way that I can in assisting our industry, ah, to be viable, to be profitable, to be able to meet consumer demands for high-quality food.</p> <p>If it's an industry that you're passionate about, you want to make it better, you want to give back to it, and you know, sometimes you think that you want to be a part of it, you've got ownership in it and, you know, quite frankly, you have a vested interest in it.</p> <p>A leader is . . . they're willing to always, always help . . . give up more of their time to . . . help out when asked to help.</p>
<p><b><i>Represent what is best for the industry</i></b></p> <p><u>Meaning Units:</u></p> <p>Believe in industry</p> <p>Be the voice of industry</p> <p>Seek to make a difference</p>	<p>It takes somebody that's willing to put aside their, their personal goals and to look at what's best for the industry. I think that's a big thing.</p> <p>I look to somebody that is willing to stand out front and say, "I represent this organization." And a big thing, I think, is, is being willing to put the goals of the organization they represent first.</p> <p>If it's good for the industry then I think, hopefully, it will be good for my business and for me personally. And . . . cultivating an environment of a positive image for beef and the beef industry.</p> <p>There is that sense of responsibility that if you think you can, or even if you can't think you can contribute, it's, um, it's knowing, that contributing makes a difference and involvement makes a difference.</p> <p>You know that whatever they're doing, right or wrong, that they're doing it for the good of the industry or for the good of the organization.</p> <p>The issues are near and dear to your business, your family, your state, your area of the country and have an impact on your livelihood.</p>

Table 9 continues

Theme	Quotes Supporting Theme
<p><b><i>Be willing to carry the bucket of water</i></b></p> <p><u>Meaning Units:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsible</li> <li>Step up to the plate</li> <li>Make decisions</li> <li>Push the envelope</li> <li>Bring people together</li> </ul>	<p>I think that a leader has to be willing, to make the tough decisions, to be willing to accept the consequence that, that decision may be wrong.</p> <p>Sometimes you've have to just make the best decision that you have with the information at hand.</p> <p>I think a leader has to be able to sometimes step back and, and take a look and be willing to think through the various issues and challenges, that we have to deal with and that the industry faces. And then you have to make, sometimes tough decisions and some other times maybe not so tough decisions, but you have to be willing to put yourself out on the line to get the industry moving in the direction that it really needs to go.</p>
<p><b><i>Gained while giving</i></b></p> <p><u>Meaning Units:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rewards</li> <li>Seek industry success</li> <li>Learn so much</li> <li>Unexpected opportunities</li> <li>Build relationships</li> </ul>	<p>This is what I owe back to the industry.</p> <p>I just like being involved. I enjoy the people. I enjoy the thought process. I always come out of those things with way more than I feel like I contributed.</p> <p>I am energized from being around people like that both in my professional life, as a ranch manager and then just as a total aside, just the intellectual stimulation of being around folks like that who just think in such amazing ways.</p> <p>The neat thing about serving on these boards is just . . . being able to be with people that are just so smart and with so many life experiences and from so many different geographical areas. If you just . . . listen and soak up all that, it's just so much to learn when you're in the midst of other good leaders.</p> <p>The knowledge that you pick up along the way, not only, the meeting those folks, but the knowledge you gain, the global perspective of your industry you learn, you really learn more about how your role or your segment of the industry fits in and how it plays out, in the industry and in the economy.</p>
<p><b><i>Have innate leadership abilities</i></b></p> <p><u>Meaning Units:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good Listener</li> <li>Well-spoken</li> <li>Garner respect</li> <li>Personal Charisma</li> <li>Integrity</li> </ul>	<p>The people I really admire and try to emulate, I think they listen first. And they listen actively.</p> <p>Those people that I see in leadership also that I admire, they seem to have that ability to digest and analyze on the fly.</p> <p>I guess I describe a leader, whatever your doing, whether it's in an organization, volunteer or paid or whatever, I mean, you have to be willing to listen to your people, the people that you're leading. You have to be willing to listen, probably listen more, as much, or if not more than what you talk.</p> <p>I think someone is a strong leader when they have the ability to, to listen and, facilitate, communication and dissemination of information.</p> <p>The final deciding factor is just personal charisma.</p>

Table 9 continues

Theme	Quotes Supporting Theme
<b><i>A natural progression</i></b> <u>Meaning Units:</u> No master plan Natural course Community leader No change in process	<p>I don't know if any of us enter into this with a plan, planned out, long-term goal of, you know, maybe some do.</p> <p>It was just a natural progression, from the very local level and the county level to the state level to the national level, and, because of all that progression and to become involved along the way.</p> <p>I would say that I wasn't necessarily self-chosen, but we were, it was instilled in our minds to not necessarily be a leader, but to be responsible for our actions and, and to be community minded.</p> <p>It was nothing ever really deliberate, but, looking back now there's been lots of things that have happened that have really helped me to develop myself as a leader. Um, that willingness to put myself out there.</p> <p>I've found that to be a satisfying course and one that I ... I'd travel the same course again</p> <p>I wouldn't change a thing. I've had an opportunity, to do a number of things and to become involved in things that I never dreamed that I, that I would be able to participate in or to be asked to do.</p>
<b><i>Selected by your peers</i></b> <u>Meaning Units:</u> Beef industry process Best representation Float to the top Humbling	<p>You would like to select the best people for the job that you can along the way, and that's part of the process and, and you're chosen by your peers.</p> <p>To be the best leader or the one that everyone wants to represent them is everybody has to personally believe in you. And, and that's the person that, that can get along with everybody, that people enjoy being around because ...our industry, the leader is chosen from within by his peers primarily.</p> <p>But for them to choose amongst themselves, who do I want to represent me to the national press or to an industry forum or to the things that I think are very important, who in this room could represent me the best? And it's not always the person that wants to lead the most that, that people choose. They choose a person that, that they think could go out and portray their views or get them the most representation in a public forum.</p> <p>When your peers select you, they've been watching you and they've been involved with you and they often know how you think and, and what you're about and what you're made of.</p>

The second theme, *Represent what is best for the industry*, was important to the participants. Many of the participants expressed they expect leaders to represent the industry to the best of their ability. The participants also expect this of themselves as they serve in a leadership role. The participants believed in order to have confidence in a

leader you must feel self-assured that the chosen leader has the best interest of the beef industry at heart.

The third theme, *Be willing to carry the bucket of water* — regardless of how heavy the bucket may be, really summarizes the important role of a leader. The participants emphasized over and over that when one steps into the role of a leader, they will be called upon to make decisions and truly lead the organization. The responsibility of being the decision maker is a huge one as described by the participants. As this theme states, the leader must carry the bucket, even if the load is heavy and overwhelming. The participants discussed the importance of a leader who can make decisions, even in cases when there are “tough decisions” to be made, or sometimes an “unpopular decision.” In the efforts to make these decisions, leaders were described as those who must be able to see the big picture and steer the organization forward

The fourth theme, *Gained while giving*, expressed the knowledge gained as the participants took on leadership roles. Many of the participants’ leader roles started at the county level and then progressed to fulfilling leadership roles at the state and/or national level. As the scope of the role expanded, the leaders had the opportunity to learn about new issues or topics, experience new things, expand the scope of people they would meet and network with, and overall gain a greater understanding of the beef industry. For the study participants, the opportunity to learn and gain new skills while giving to their industry was rewarding and at times they felt like they were gaining more than they were giving. While in fact they were gaining while giving.

The fifth theme, *Have innate leadership abilities*, describes the many characteristics the participants believe a leader should have or that many of the leaders

which they emulate possess. The participants did not express that leaders were “extraordinary” people, rather they focused on describing a leader who mixed character with, integrity, hard work, dedication, responsibility and substance. For those leaders who the participants looked up to, they were ordinary people, who mixed together abilities resulting in personal charisma and that made those in the industry believe and trust in the leader. The participants mentioned that yes, with leadership you receive a “title” whether it be the title of president, committee chair or some other role, but they confirmed that it was how the leader acted as a result of that title and fulfilled the responsibilities bestowed upon him by his peers that made the person a leader.

*A natural progression*, was the sixth theme. During the interviews, the participants were asked to explain their process or steps towards becoming an industry leader. Unanimously, the answer was “it was a natural progression” or “unplanned.” The participants commonly expressed they did not have “set goals,” “or a plan to leadership,” or any form of structured steps that took them from point A to point B and then maybe on to point C. The more common response was that “things just fell into place.” The natural progression seemed to be fueled by their willingness to get active, take an interest in the industry and a desire to learn more. In response to if they would have made any changes to the process or steps to leadership, again there was a uniform answer from the participants: they responded No.

The seventh and final theme, was *Selected by your peers*. During several of the interviews it was mentioned how unique the leadership process is in the beef industry because leaders are selected by their peers. In typical, traditional leadership positions management selects the leader and the leader then becomes responsible for one or more

followers. However, that is not the case in volunteer membership organizations like state cattlemen or national cattlemen organizations. Rather, leaders are selected by their peers to move into leadership roles, or in some cases recruited by their fellow association members and asked to serve a committee or board role. Once in leadership roles, leaders work with their peers to make industry decisions, and although the responsibility of “leading” rests on the shoulders of the selected leader, the significant difference in levels of authority as seen in the traditional leader follower setting does occur with peer leaders.

**Theme One: The World is Run by those who Show Up.** Overwhelmingly the most common thread throughout the interviews was the description of leaders who step forward, get involved, get active and consistently show up and take part in the functions and activities to serve the organization. As a result of their presence in these roles, the individuals were more visible within the organization and soon the individual’s willingness to take part and help out the organization was noticed by their fellow association members. The leader then begins to step into roles of responsibility in addition to their day to day role as an association member. They may join a committee, agree to serve on a board, or even take on the role of leading a committee or organization. In time, the individual sees the importance of their contribution to the organization and others in the organization notice the role of this individual as well. As described by the participants, they step into leadership roles because of their “dedication,” “willingness to serve and give of their time” and they realize how important “showing up” and taking part means to their industry.

Robert and three others during the interviews recalled hearing reference to a specific statement highlighting the importance of showing up. Robert says,

A few years ago, an individual said at a national industry meeting, you know, the decisions are '*made by those who show up*' . . . so, I think one of the things and most of the people that I'm involved with that have been in leadership positions are those who've been willing to *show up* . . . willing to put in the time . . . and spend the money that it takes and the effort and . . . have the attitude of wanting to be involved.

Allen echoes what Robert said, "You know, it's said that the '*world is run by those who show up*,' so I think number one is just showing up . . . going to the local meetings or the educational events and showing interest."

In describing his process of moving into leadership roles Matt also emphasized the importance of showing up,

the number one thing is, is showing up, is going to the meetings and being involved. And because I was there and I was consistent and I was willing to serve, I was given every opportunity, to move up as and if I didn't push to move up, some other people came to me and said, "Hey, I think you would do a good job in this role.

The participants agreed that their willingness to get active and become more visible demonstrated the value they placed on being advocates for the organization. In some cases the participants were out there encouraging members to join the cattle organization and in other cases the participants were speaking to groups in an effort to educate others about the beef industry and trying to put a face on agriculture and those who produce food. Seeking to build membership, being vocal and positive about the industry, working to bring people together, contributing their knowledge, trying to empower others, or facilitating a discussion were all ways these industry leaders contributed when they showed up to help the beef industry move forward.

Jeff describes a leader as not only one who shows up, but when a leader shows up Jeff believes this is a great indicator of dedication. He says leaders are,



Dedicated to their industry . . . they're dedicated to what they do . . . they're dedicated towards improving their industry and they're dedicated towards the future of it because that's what these organizations really are trying to do is look out for the best interest of the industry.

Jeff ended his description of a leader's dedication to the industry by also making mention of hearing the statement of "*the world's run by those who show up.*"

Kim associated one's willingness to show up as their readiness to dedicate time to the industry. She said,

Being willing to give time and get involved in the process, but the time itself is key. And the willingness to attend the meetings and the willingness to read the background material to become involved in an issue and take a stand.

Others mentioned terms such as "willingness to do whatever needs to be done to get the job done" (Liz, participant); "someone who is very giving of their time and themselves," (Dale, participant) and "those who show up and are willing to commit the time that it takes to be involved with these volunteer organizations, that's basically the beef industry structure" (Jeff, participant).

The participants were asked if their perception of leadership had changed once they moved into leadership roles and were 'rubbing shoulders' with other leaders. Once again the focus on dedication, time and willingness to serve were common responses from the participants. They reiterated that once they got more entrenched into leadership they gained even greater respect for the time commitments and devotion volunteer organization members were willing to offer.

Giving of time and balancing time was emphasized often by the participants. Many talked about how difficult it is to leave their ranch or feedlot because of the commitments they have to their business or their family operations. It was described that when the participants step into a volunteer leader role with their respective membership

organization, it is a tremendous commitment because they also have responsibilities back at home to provide for their family's livelihood. Some expressed that due to additional family members at home or dedicated employees they were able to volunteer their time for the industry. However, it was emphasized by nearly all the participants that some people who may be leaders that could help drive the industry and give their knowledge and foresight to the industry, are unable to do so because of the demands of their home business. As the participants noted, "you have to have the ability to leave your base operation."

When describing why some of his peers have remained active and some others have not, Matt describes it as,

it comes down to people saying that I just can't go and be gone all the time from my business, and not seeing, not recognizing, the need I guess . . . or how important it is to give time, sacrifice time, for the organization, and everybody's operation is different.

Ben understands that some individuals have restraints that don't allow them to get as involved as they maybe would like to. He describes this as,

I think there's probably lots of people that could be leaders and just choose not to, whether it's time or whether it's personal things or health or whatever, they may be a lot better leaders than, than we have now but they're the ones who choose not to for whatever internal reasons.

As the participants talked about their contribution of time and willingness to serve their respective leadership organizations there was reference made by the younger interview participants that their willingness to show interest and get involved was accepted by their peers particularly those who are the senior members in the organization. Three of the younger interview participants agreed opportunities are available if the younger generation has the time and is willing to step up. Brett commented, "there is a ton of

opportunity, if you take the time to get involved at the state or local,” and Allen said, “I’m a first generation rancher . . . yet I’ve still had all the opportunities I’ve ever wanted then some more.” Matt witnessed opportunities as well, he says, “I realized that, at least my personal views, the opportunities are wide open, are almost limitless, to move up in the organization if you are willing to serve and serve for the benefit of the organization or the benefit of the members.”

Interestingly, those interviewed who have had more years of experience in the industry and are now looking back and seeing another generation behind them to move into the leadership roles, these individuals were concerned about the opportunities as well as the balance it requires for the young generation to be involved. Henry is concerned about the next generation and the ability for them to be able to enter the business. He explains his concern this way, “I think economically it’s very, very challenging for young people to, do it (production agriculture).” Henry is concerned that current agricultural leaders are aware of the challenges of the next generation moving into agriculture, but he is concerned that there is a lot of talk about it, but not much happening on this issue. Dale agreed with the concern presented by Henry. As Dale looks ahead to his future involvement in the industry he indicated his interest to stay active but to also encourage the next generation to become more involved with public affairs of the industry. Dale said, “As we have witnessed a mass exodus of youth from our industry it is more imperative for those remaining to become involved with the shaping of their industry and livelihoods.” The challenge then presents itself — with less of the next generation in agriculture what does this do for leadership.

**Theme Two: Represent What is Best for the Industry.** As beef industry leaders, it was obvious this group of participants took their role as leaders in the industry very seriously. The participants expressed how important their role was as a leader because it not only impacted the industry but it also impacted their livelihood. They commented if the industry was not successful and thriving then their business would mostly likely follow suit.

The participants commonly spoke of the challenges facing the agricultural industry and how critical it is for the industry to pull together and stand up and be heard. Several of them talked of the attacks on the industry from several fronts including advocacy groups and challenges with government regulations and economic pressures. Some expressed the fact that the beef industry is generally considered a small industry recalling hearing many times that less than 2% of the population is involved in agriculture. Thus as beef producers the industry is small and there are fewer and fewer beef producers each year as the industry sees shrinking numbers of operations. The participants emphasized how critical it was for leaders representing the beef industry be leaders who will speak up and speak in unison for the values and goals of the industry. The participants emphasized that “it’s will take effective leadership going forward in order to keep this industry going.” The participants deemed this expectation for themselves as leaders to carry out and also insist on it for their peer leaders.

Jeff explained that leaders should make every effort to be true to the industry. He says,

Agriculture’s not a transient business. You’re not in and out. You generally grow up in it and your interest and involvement and awareness of issues surrounding the industry certainly starts at an early age . . . I think that just continues when you

join these organizations, you have that awareness and the issues are near and dear to your business, your family, your state, your area of the country.

Matt summarized many of the thoughts the participants expressed in the theme by saying “To be a leader, and to be a good leader for our industry, it takes somebody that’s willing to put aside their personal goals and to look at what’s best for the industry.” Ben sees the challenge for today’s beef industry leaders is to bring some new ideas to reality. He says, “a beef industry leader is to be a thought leader and be able to come up with new ideas and not just the stuff that we do every year,” and indicates that as a leader himself, this is a challenge to bring new and fresh ideas, to fellow participants.

Henry knows leaders make the commitment because the outcome is to benefit the industry, he explains,

They (leadership roles) did take a lot of time and required a lot of commitment to follow through. And so I guess it has to do with how well it strikes home or it actually affects you personally, while at the same time you feel like you’re really doing it for the betterment of everybody.

Robert, along with his fellow beef leaders, is motivated to “cultivate an environment, a positive image for beef and the beef industry,” and is challenged to stay involved.

I look at that (speaking up for the industry) as a challenge even though you get frustrated by the bureaucrats and you get frustrated by the false things that come out in the press . . . while it frustrates you, I think it still motivates you and challenges you to be involved and try to change that perception and change those falsehoods into positives.

Cindy believes the role of the leader in representing the industry is to be “thinking past the current crisis.” She describes this leader as someone who can often be found saying, “What will we face not just what are we facing this year . . . or next year, it’s what we will we face in five years that we need to be putting something in place.” To Cindy a leader is always looking out for the industry, looking ahead to for the next generation, so

one is not caught just trying to stay on top of the current crisis and representing the industry on tough issues, internal or external. Cindy sums up her thoughts with this quote, “You’re either at the table or you’re on the menu.”

Allen goes on to say when describing a leader,

I think for me . . . about the most important is just integrity. Just being honest, being there for the right reasons, no agenda, but you just really want to serve the industry, want to make the industry better, want to make the organizations stronger . . . for future generations.

Allen also commented that,

You don’t have to wonder where they’re coming from. You don’t have to wonder what angle they’re trying to take. You know that whatever they’re doing, right or wrong, that they’re doing it for the good of the industry or for the good of the organization.

Matt summarizes what many of the participants reflected on when discussing the selection of leaders to represent them as members of these cattle organizations,

It comes down to picking the people that can put the good of the industry over their personal gain because, that’s what we have to look for in state representation and national representation, it is people that are willing to do what is best for the whole industry. And so that’s the tier that ends up going a little further.

**Theme Three: Be Willing to Carry the Bucket of Water.** Stepping into a leadership role involves taking on new responsibilities and challenges, and as described by the participants, when taking on the role of being an industry leader it is imperative to be committed to the responsibility. This responsibility was described by the terms, “taken their turn at digging the ditches” (participant, Liz) and “leaders roll up their sleeves and get dirty and work hard together” (participant, Tom). Part of this responsibility the participants expressed comes in different forms described as leading the group, making decisions, pushing the envelope and sometimes saying things that others don’t want to hear but things that may need to be voiced to advance the industry.

The leaders noted the industry is facing many changes and many assumed the industry will see more changes in the next five years than the industry has seen in the past two decades. These changes could be in technology, public policy and regulations. The participants agreed many tough decisions were ahead for leaders in the beef industry.

Ben says:

It's very important to be willing to carry the bucket of water, regardless of how heavy the bucket may be. The responsibilities of leadership are great and I think you must be willing to not just "occasionally carry it," but if you're in that position (a leadership role), you must be prepared to always carry it and regardless of how heavy the burden may be, how heavy the bucket may be loaded, you're the one who, when asked to step into that position, that said, Yes. And by saying yes, that is a strong commitment to time and energy and intellect.

Ben believes by stepping into the role of a leader, whether you are appointed by your peers or you volunteer for the position, you have moved into a role where you have said you will be a leader and along with this leadership role comes consistency in following through, making decisions and being committed to your role. Ben recognizes the challenge that faces leaders today and commented,

sometimes you don't have the luxury of time to analyze all the aspects of the situation that you're having, attempting to make that perfect decision . . . sometimes you've have to just make the best decision that you have with the information at hand.

Cindy sees the responsibility of a leader's role to an organization much like Ben described. She believes the leader's role is to be "consistently out there pushing the envelope." And by doing so the leader "doesn't always tell us what we want to hear." For Cindy the role of a leader means they are out front taking a hard stand. She recalls a strong leader at the national beef industry level who "took on really hard issues . . . and kept at it with that consistent message." Matt agrees that a leader should be "willing to stand up there and be the front person."

A leader who can make a decision and “take a stand on things that may not always be popular” was also described as an important role for leader by Brett. Brett says,

Everybody may not agree with you, but if you don’t make, if you’re not willing to make a decision and stand by it and also to go along with that, you have to admit, you have to be able to admit when you’re wrong.

In Henry’s leadership roles, he has witnessed his skills utilized to help guide his respective organizations through the decision making process. He describes the role of “leadership as, it is to find ways to accommodate the needs of the industry while at the same time, trying to work with the outside pressures that are pushing change.” As a decision maker, Henry says you are also a facilitator bringing both sides together to deal with the issues.

As a leader herself, Liz says, “I’ve always believed that I would never ask anyone to do anything I wasn’t willing to do myself. I think that’s critical for a leader.” Liz emphasized that if you are a leader, no matter if you are running a ranch or whatever you are doing you need to be right there helping others, be in the trenches working alongside them (members, employees). To Liz this demonstrates responsibility and accountability.

Robert says, “leaders are decisive people who, who are able to make a decision and point the organization in the proper direction.” Dale has experienced part of being able to make decisions is taking the time to learn and study the issues. Dale says, “I found that it takes a lot of work, both at the board meeting and at home on your own, to prepare yourself for these meetings.”

One participant expressed now that he is a leader, he has a much greater understanding of how decisions are made and because of this he has more faith in the



overall decision making process. In fact, several of the participants encourage their fellow cattlemen to get involved and gain a greater understanding of the process, because they have witnessed fellow members who are not active in the process, or “on the outside” criticize the process and not have faith in the decision making process. This was expressed as a frustration by several of the beef industry leaders that their peers will complain about a situation but not get involved or seek to learn more about the process. Those interviewed indicated they gained more admiration for their peer leaders in volunteer roles who are giving of their time to make tough and challenging decisions, once they were more involved in the process and not looking from the outside in.

**Theme Four: Gained While Giving.** The 12 participants were all very giving of their time when asked by the researcher to volunteer their time to be an interview participant in this study. Those interviewed have served in roles such as county and state president, committee members and chairpersons, represented their state on the CBB or NCBA Board of Directors or other relevant national membership associations as well as served in many committee roles for these national organizations and other industry related organizations such as Cattle-Fax. In addition, some of the participants have been selected or asked to serve on county, state or federal government committees or advisory boards representing their interest and knowledge of the beef industry. Thus, the pool of participants interviewed had a very diverse background and approximately 175 years of volunteer leader experience to the beef industry.

For most of the participants their involvement started at the county level and then over the years they broadened to take on leadership roles in additional areas. In each of these steps, the leaders devoted time away from their businesses, family and local

communities to represent the beef cattle industry. However, a common theme throughout the interviews was that giving to the industry resulted in more return to the participants than they could have hoped for or anticipated.

For example, two of the participants referred to taking on leadership roles—one at the state level and one at the national level—shortly before being thrust into a major national issue. This national issue occurred on December 23, 2003, when the USDA announced a presumptive diagnosis of the first known case of BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy), a neurological disorder in cattle, found in the United States. These two participants recalled the hectic schedules they soon assumed, the numerous media interviews they conducted in addition to travel to special meetings. But both of these leaders also spoke of the once in a lifetime experience to be involved at ground zero on such a significant issue at such a challenging time for the beef industry.

Brett says of his tenure as a state cattlemen president,

I had an agenda that I wanted to try and accomplish which I think most every president has. And it quickly became defined as something else . . . quickly my presidency became dealing with BSE . . . it was quite interesting. And I'll tell you what, I gained a huge appreciation for the state and national partnerships and the partnerships we have between the Beef Councils and the Federation, it was actually, it was awesome to see the industry pull together.

Describing his role during the BSE situation, Jeff says,

You never know where it (leadership) is going to take you and what the challenge to the industry is going to be . . . I became involved when BSE hit in 2003 . . . it's an extremely interesting and rewarding experience and certainly gained a tremendous amount of knowledge of the issue, of the situation.

For Jeff and Brett their involvement at a crucial time in the industry resulted in a very interesting and unexpected experience for them. Kim noted she too has gained and learned while giving of her time and interests to the industry.

Kim expresses her experience as,

I just like being involved . . . I enjoy the people. I enjoy the thought process. I always come out of those things with way more than I feel like I contributed; getting to hear other people come at, either an issue or a point . . . sometimes I just sit back and go, “Wow.” It’s that exposure to people whose brains just work on totally a different level and what I can gather and garner from their knowledge.

When asked about her plans for future leadership involvement, Kim quickly responded and said,

I can’t overemphasize this enough, that I get so much out of the process in terms of both direct knowledge and involvement in the issues, the things that affect the industry and then an indirect bounce from my involvement, in networking and connections.

Allen also feels he has gained a lot from working with his peers and says,

That’s the neat thing about serving on these boards . . . being able to be with people that are just so smart and with so many life experiences and from so many different geographical areas. If you just listen and soak up all that, it’s just so much to learn when you are in the midst of other good leaders.

Dale reinforced the opportunity to gain new knowledge from his involvement in organizations and commented that “I’ve found it to be very educational . . . I gained a lot of education from the fellow board members.” For example Dale describes the opportunity to learn how to negotiate with other people and share ideas for the betterment of the industry. Several of the participants reflected on their opportunity, especially when involved at the national level, to learn from their fellow cattlemen and cattlemen about beef industry issues and production practices from different geographical regions.

Tom and Allen summarized some of the comments that were indicative of this theme as presented by the other participants. Tom emphasized,

I’ve gained a lot more from it than I’ve given over the years from any leadership position I’ve had, I think, because I’ve met so many people and I’ve learned so much and I’ve been a part of so many situations going forward that, it’s just been a tremendous experience for me.

Allen commented, “the industry is blessed with people that feel like that this industry’s been good to them and they need to give back in some way, and that way and means of giving back is through leadership.”

**Theme Five: Have Innate Leadership Abilities.** When the interview participants were asked to define or describe a leader, they listed a long list of qualities and characteristics which to them a leader should encompass. These traits are summarized in Figure 1 and also explained in greater detail in the relevant findings section later in this chapter (see Leader Traits). However, the emphasis on leadership traits was indicated strongly by the participants and thus also considered to be a theme reflective of the primary comments.

The participants were also asked if there was a leader who they consider a role model or someone they emulate and if so, what are the qualities and characteristics of that person. After much analysis and comparison there was duplication across the participants’ answers but there was also a lot of variety and uniqueness. Yet, the one common element that came through in the interviews was the person or persons they emulate as a leader, is someone who they respect, look up to and would most like to model or pattern their leadership abilities after.

Kim describes one of the leaders she emulates in the industry as someone with seemingly effortless and *innate leadership abilities*. The ability of this person to listen to a discussion, analyze it and then when they speak up everyone in the room listens because they are aware of this person’s ability to summarize a discussion is something Kim finds to be a true ability in a leader. Kim goes on to describe this person as one who

“has the ability to engage people and make them feel like what they have to say is the most important thing that is being said at that time.”

Kim also sees a leaders’ ability to listen as strong quality. She says,

The people (leaders) I really admire and try to emulate, I think they listen first. And they listen actively . . . they are not always the loudest or most involved in the discussion, but when they open their mouth what comes out is well thought through, well-spoken and really, really contributes to the conversation at hand.

Many of the participants emphasized the importance of a leader’s ability to listen or listen first before they react or talk. Additional communication skills were also mentioned, but the strongest emphasis and most commonly mentioned communication skill was a leader’s ability to listen.

Tom says this about listening skills,

A leader is not necessarily the first one to speak on a subject . . . but the one to rather take it all in and, and then be able to, take the discussion maybe to a more unified level.

As Tom described the value of a leader’s listening ability and other important characteristics such as work ethic and bringing people together he went on to comment that these are traits he believes allows an individual to also garner respect from. He concluded by saying, “if we’re a leader, we’re not effective if we don’t have the respect of those around us,” and he cautions that a leader without respect from others has difficulty accomplishing the tasks at hand.

Henry was another participant that reiterated the importance of listening as one of the innate abilities of a leader. Henry spoke of two leaders he respects in the industry and their ability to listen, process the information and then deliver it in a format that people can understand. Henry described one of his role model leaders this way, “He takes an analytical approach to digesting what has been done and in, in the next breath talking

about what might be. I think (this person) does a marvelous job at doing that.” Kim explained a similar skill as, “the natural and developed ability to digest and analyze on the fly.”

Cindy commented that at times she can forget to communicate but viewing this characteristic in other leaders has helped her to see its importance. She says, “I see, in other individuals that I would consider leaders, I see them really do a good job of keeping that communication, going both ways. I appreciate that and I think that’s a huge leadership quality.”

Brett echoed the thoughts of his fellow peer leaders and participants,

Whatever you’re doing (as a leader), whether it’s in an organization, volunteer or paid or whatever, I mean you have to be willing to listen to your people, the people that you’re leading . . . probably listen more, as much or if not more than what you talk.

The skill of listening was also mentioned by Dale. He says, “Successful leaders are often talented with the qualities of being great listeners to ensure input from their constituents contributes to the final action or policy.” In addition to listening skills, the participants mentioned several other important abilities in leaders. These were innovative, selfless, humble, lead by example, integrity, empower others, passionate, hard worker and trustworthy.

Liz says leaders she emulates in the beef industry are leaders because of their ability to be a leader in their profession whether it is in ranching or in education. To Liz these leaders were determined, innovative, driven, and not afraid to stand up for what they believed. Two of her role models are also successful women ranchers and she holds much admiration for these women who were icons in their time (and still today), and

gave much to the industry yet held together their family ranching operations all these years.

Jeff expressed his view and said a leader should,

have a broad-based knowledge of all the facets of the industry, somebody who's respected, someone with integrity, someone that can communicate with staff or with these different stakeholder groups, as they represent the organization and the industry they stand for. It's somebody that hopefully most people look up to within the industry.

Robert thinks a leader's ability to be able to bring people together and get others to follow them is an important trait of a leader. He says

being a leader is not always a popularity contest, but it doesn't hurt to have a few (supporters), you don't want to be a column of one. You don't want to look around and have nobody behind you . . . they need to be able to build consensus.

Along those same lines, Matt has high expectations for industry leaders. He describes a leader as someone with, "a personal charisma thing or that everybody recognizes that you bring something special to the table – a real knowledge or an exceptional passion."

Ben commented on the respect he has gained for leaders who are devoted to the industry and their role. But he also mentioned his disappointment when a leader steps into a role just for the title and is not willing to devote themselves to the expectations of the position. Several of the participants agreed that respect is also lost when a leader compromises their principles because they are caught up in the title or the image of the position. Leaders in roles for the wrong reasons are frustrating and disappointing, expressed the participants but, many also commented that they see this situation happening far less in the beef industry than other sectors of society and it was suggested this may be due to the true devotion beef producers have for their industry.

**Theme Six: A Natural Progression.** The participants were asked about their process in becoming a leader and if they would change anything about the process they experienced. The participants unanimously answered this question. None of the leaders said they set out to be industry leaders. In fact, several of them described it as a “natural progression” that just seemed to happen or fall into place. As the leaders described their process many of them considered it more of a stepping stone process. As they stepped forward, an opportunity would present itself or they would see a place they needed to assist their membership organization and volunteer their time. As the stepping stone process occurred, more doors opened and the leaders became more involved.

Four of the participants informed the researcher they were “not sure they were a leader” or should be “defined” that way. They commented on being surprised when the researcher referred to them as an industry leader or when the researcher said they were selected as a possible participant in this study because they had been identified as an industry leader.

Cindy wasn’t sure she was an industry leader when she was contacted to participate in the study, but after giving it more thought she realized her active role in organizations and as a result of her current role in the state organization she should consider herself a leader. “You know, maybe, maybe I am (a leader).” The other participants, who hesitated on calling themselves a leader, realized as they answered the interview questions or analyzed their role in the industry further they should consider themselves an industry leader.

Focusing on the process to leadership, all the participants agreed their evolution to an industry leader ‘just happened’ without a plan in place.



Jeff says,

I don't know if any of us enter into this with a plan, or planned out, long-term goal, maybe some do . . . but for me, the more I became involved, the more it, it um, piqued my interests or I guess I enjoyed the challenge of the issues that you see in the industry.

Jeff explained that the more he got involved, other people steered or encouraged him into different directions and it just was an overall building of involvement and experiences.

Like Jeff, Brett also didn't have a plan. He describes his process to leadership roles as,

I didn't have any grand master plan of becoming president or doing what I'm doing at (the national level). I think as opportunities arise and you see yourself being able to give something to that position or making the time, and you know, I don't, take on anything that I don't think I can't handle in terms of time or commitment.

Liz says, "I didn't really seek to become a beef industry leader. I have to be perfectly honest with you . . . it just kind of happened." Liz went on to describe the process happened when she got involved in a state agricultural leadership training program and a national young leader's conference (Young Cattlemen's Conference) hosted by the NCBA. She then moved into the role of district director for the state cattlemen's organization and continued into several other leadership positions from that point forward.

After college, Dale was ready to move back home and be a full-time rancher and the thoughts of getting involved in the industry as a spokesperson and a leader were not at the forefront of his mind. "I guess I always thought I was just going to be a rancher and not have to worry about all the industry problems and just go out and raise cows every day." He credits his years of involvement in FFA and 4-H and family upbringing for

teaching him the importance of responsibility and as his responsibility to the industry grew, so did his involvement outside his ranching operation.

Being responsible seemed to spark Robert's role towards his process to leadership as well. Robert says, "I don't like the word evolve, but you, I think you grow into more and more responsibility."

With Ben his responsibility came in his willingness to volunteer, his appreciation of the issues and thinking them through and starting to get involved in committees. He describes his entrance into leadership as a "natural course" and "I've found that to be a satisfying course and one that I, you know, I'd travel the same course again." For Tom it was very similar to Ben's process. Tom says, "I've really never gone about seeking a role in leadership, it just came about." Tom believed that as he was given the opportunity to get involved in his state and national organization he took on the challenge. Tom says, "Leadership is an opportunity. I think it's more valuable if it comes as an opportunity that you accept rather than going out and seeking an office or something like that."

For Kim it was "nothing ever really deliberate" that she had planned out for her involvement as an industry leader. She says, "Looking back now there's been a lot of things that has happened that have really helped for me to develop myself as a leader . . . but I had to be willing to put myself forward first by becoming involved."

Four of the participants mention the role of a mentor, who along the way guided them through the process and towards the role of an industry leader. Brett recalls,

I had kind of people that mentored me. You know there was mentors along the way, and it wasn't anything defined but, I mean I had a good friend of mine that went through (a similar role) ahead of me, so I could ask him . . . it's kind of a good process to have somebody to, to be able to talk with, take you through the steps that's been there.

Not only did these participants commonly agree they moved into leadership roles by a process of natural progression, another common denominator was the majority of the participants said they would not make any changes to the process or steps in their progression to leadership.

Jeff comments, “I wouldn’t go back and change anything” and he makes note of how fortunate he was to have a family operation with support at home that allowed him to be able to commit time and participate in industry leadership roles. Dale feels confident that he would not have done anything differently in his process to becoming a leader. He knows that as situations came along he got involved in the issues that were important to him and his business and he helped in the best way he could to get involved and solve that situation or problem.

A few of the participants expressed their concern with the fuzziness of the process to move into leadership roles. They realized that as they got involved with an organization, leadership opportunities were available to them. But in some cases they wondered if the path to leadership within organizations, especially those at the national level which involve a greater scope of people, should be more clearly spelled out for the benefit of those interested. Some of the participants’ referenced they were not sure what was always expected of them in committee positions and in addition, if being on a certain committee meant they could move into different leadership roles in the future. With the many ranching and business responsibilities they have at home, one participant wondered if a greater understanding among members, of the leadership opportunities within an organization, and the expectations would encourage more participation. Opening the

doors to the next generation and being inclusive to individuals with an interest in serving was suggested by another participant as a goal for organizations to work toward.

**Theme Seven: Selected by Your Peers.** As a beef industry leader your role is defined uniquely by your peers. Peers have the opportunity to recruit, nominate or encourage and support you to take on the leader role. If your peers do not see in you the leader they believe is needed to stand up and represent the industry, they will not support your move into a leadership position.

Several of the participants discussed this uniqueness of how leaders are selected by peers in beef industry membership organizations. Robert says,

I think one of the, to me, that's the highest honor to be selected by your peers, so I think there's a process of refinement that goes on over a period of time. Your peers, they may be your friends but they can also be your harshest judge sometimes too and I think that when your peers select you they've been watching you.

Robert also said it's humbling to know that your peers, either at the state or national level, are the ones that are either recruiting or suggesting you for positions of leadership.

Jeff says, "You don't commit that level of time and make that level of commitment to the industry and be selected by your peers, without having the ability to fulfill the role that you have been selected for."

Matt agrees, "in our industry, the leader is chosen from within by his peers primarily." Matt indicates this makes the movement into leadership roles and the selection as a leader unique in the beef industry.

Robert also describes the leadership process in the beef industry as,

People seem to sort through who has really got meaningful ideas and input versus those who are just there to spend the time and, I think the industry tends then to sort through and pick out those people that move up into leadership positions.

Henry has witnessed the role of peers in the beef industry organization. He spoke of the development of peer groups that one builds relationships with as you work on issues and before you know it you are relying on your peers to help gather information on issues and move tasks forward. “I think people (in the beef industry) become reliant on one another.”

Tom recognizes his contribution as a volunteer leader and realizes that he and others volunteer because of their love and respect for the industry. But the recognition of being selected by his peers did not go unnoticed by Tom. Tom commented,

It’s a tremendous honor to be recognized as a leader in the industry, but even probably more so in my view anyway, it’s a tremendous responsibility because you are given the opportunity to steer some very forward thinking decision making . . . I’ve been awarded opportunities to lead, and have been asked to do so that’s what I mean by being given the opportunity.

### **Other Relevant Findings**

**Traits of a Beef Industry Leader.** The participants were asked to define or describe a leader to answer the research question of, “How do industry leaders characterize industry leadership.” Many terms and short statements were provided by the participants as they described a leader. The researcher reviewed all the responses in the process of coding and identifying themes from the transcripts. Because of interest to gain a greater understanding of how these identified industry leaders define and describe leadership, the results were not only mentioned in the Theme: “*Have innate leadership abilities*,” but an additional schematic was created to focus on the characteristics (Figure 1).

The primary traits of beef industry leaders have been identified with a trait name that represents the comments and responses that were associated and grouped into that

trait. The traits are sorted by the researcher based on the emphasis indicated by the participants from left to right in Figure 1. For example – Trait #1 - *Willingness to Serve* was selected to be the first trait listed in the order of the traits identified because willingness to serve and the associated terms (see descriptors in bottom level boxes) were most commonly stated by the participants. The following, in order of emphasis placed by the participants, were identified as traits that were positively associated with leadership: (a) Willingness to serve, (b) Decision Maker, (c) Believe in Industry, (d) Knowledgeable, (e) Ability to Listen/Communicator, (f) Team Player/Motivator, and (g) Integrity/Character.

**Sources of Motivation.** One of the six questions discussed during the interview was: “How would you describe the process or steps you took or experience in becoming an industry leader,” and two of the probes focused on why did you become an industry leader or were you motivated to be a leader. These questions allowed the researcher to gather data from the participants that may allow some representation of common motivations among beef industry leaders. All 12 of the participants expressed their motivation to be an industry leader was based on their belief that in the industry and that it was their duty to stand up and help the industry in any way they could.

Matt says,

I care. I cared about the people that I was representing. I cared about the industry. And, and I cared about my operation, and I knew what was good for the whole industry, state and nationally, was going to be good for my operation.

Liz’s response shows her motivation to support the industry and she is motivated because,

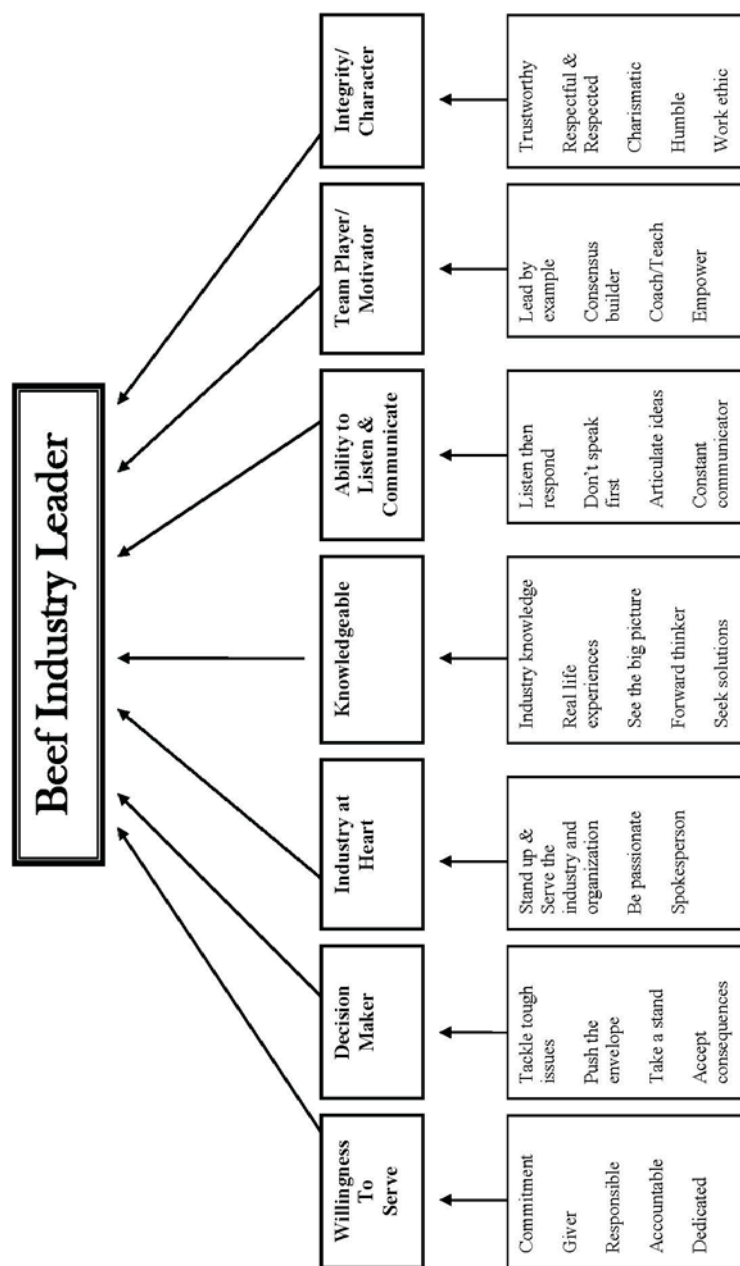


Figure 1. Traits of a beef industry leader.

The fact that my life depends on it. My livelihood depends on it. I think that's the bottom-line . . . I believe my way of life and ranching and providing food for the American people, for the world, depends on me being heard.

Many of the participants see their role as a spokesperson and are motivated to speak up just as Liz is. Cindy says,

Being involved in the agriculture industry from day one you constantly see the attacks that are not warranted. And so that, I think drives a person to try to right the wrong, and, you don't do that just by sitting back. You do that by being involved.

Henry echoes this statement saying he was motivated to get involved, to speak up on the issues and out of concern for the future of the industry and his family's operation. Robert also described his situation as his "desire to help in any way that I can in assisting our industry, to be viable, to be profitable and be able to meet consumer demands for high-quality food."

Ben, one of three participants who did not grow up in the beef industry, says,

It's an industry that allowed somebody like me to learn the industry, later in life and not grow up in it, and has handsomely rewarded me in, not only in financial terms, but in worth, feeling worthwhile of what I'm doing and that I'm making some contribution to society and, and you know, and providing a healthy product for my grandkids . . . and so, because of that, I've become more active and the older that I've got, as somewhat of a payback to the industry . . . this is what I owe back to the industry, so to speak.

Allen, who also didn't grow up in the cattle business, speaks of his motivation very similar to that of Ben. Allen says,

If it's an industry that you're passionate about, you want make it better, you want give back to it and sometimes you think that you want be a part of it, you've got ownership in it and quite frankly, you have a vested interest in it . . . this might sound, a bit self-serving but I want to have a say-so in our industry.



Allen sees his family continuing on with the operation he initiated and since the industry has been good to him he feels committed to help the industry be sustainable for the next generation, which may be his family.

Tom was raised in the industry and was motivated to get involved to give back.

Tom says this about why he got involved,

I think just the interest and love that I had for the industry and, and as time went by, what the industry had given to me and my family and I mean, ... everybody says this, but it's true, ...you want give something back. You want to try to do everything you can to make the industry as good as it can be and as successful as it can be going forward, and if you've got something that you can, contribute . . . I feel you need to do that.

Brett, who indicated he enjoys being active in the industry, also expressed his link with the other participants.

I guess there's probably a little bit of a self-serving role and that's to make my business better, whether it's to attract more customers for feeding cattle or it's better, indirectly, what I do creates more demand for our product which gets me better prices.

In addition to the primary motivator of believing in their industry, three of the participants indicated they enjoyed being a leader. Kim mentioned her enjoyment with being involved as, "You just come home fired up and ready to go," She enjoys the people she has met and worked with on committees and is energized from being around the people in the industry and the intellectual stimulation from the discussions. Brett also enjoys the opportunity to meet new people and make friends with other beef producers and leaders from across the country. "I enjoy the social aspect of the meetings and conventions and the friendships that I have made."

Dale finds his role as a beef industry leader rewarding and the affirmation from others motivates him to devote the time and effort he does to his leadership role. Dale

has taken on the responsibility as a spokesperson for the industry in as many ways and as often as he can, which in many cases is writing his thoughts about issues to educate others. “I do have people come up and say they appreciate me looking out for their business,” Dale indicates that it is rewarding to know that he is doing his part to make a difference.

Jeff also mentioned that it is rewarding to participate as a leader in the industry. He talked about how rewarding it is to see the successes along the way as a result of either your involvement or the industry coming together. “I just can’t underscore the rewards you get from participating in leadership roles,” says Jeff as he described how his involvement has resulted in the capability to meet people from around the country and work alongside them on issues.

Cindy challenges herself and has that internal fortitude to constantly be involved and speak up for the industry so that the “agency people or external people don’t define who we are or how we do our business.”

### **Summary of Findings**

This chapter provided the findings from the study. Due to limited research conducted on this topic, the findings provided a culmination of new information about leadership in membership organizations, specifically those associated with the beef industry.

Liz’s description of the role of a leader who is in charge of planning a cattle drive, is very representative to what all the participants have expressed as the role and function of a leader. She says,

But I think a leader’s role is to try to be open, to be objective, and to try to see the big picture and the best way to get through it. It’s just like a guy, a cowboy that’s

on a cattle drive. He's the one that drops you off. He's the one that designs the, the drive. And he puts everybody in place where he feels like they're going to be most effective, and then everybody works together to get, to get the cattle to the pens. And so, I think that, that's a leader. The object is getting the cattle to the pen!

Seven primary themes emerged from the data collected through the telephone interviews and researcher notes. The seven themes were:

1. The world is run by those who show up.
2. Represent what is best for the industry.
3. Be willing to carry the bucket of water.
4. Gained while giving.
5. Have innate leadership abilities.
6. A natural progression.
7. Selected by your peers.

These seven themes combined are the core of the essence of the phenomenon of what brings leaders to leadership roles as described by 12 active beef industry leaders.

Overall, the participants in this study were very representative of typical beef industry producers who focus on making their livelihood in the beef industry. They represented seedstock, commercial cow/calf, backgrounder/stocker and feedlot operators from across the nation. They were all very considerate of the project and expressed overall interest in the topic and the findings once the interviews were completed and once they had an opportunity to gain a greater grasp on the contents of the project. Although some of the participants were surprised to be identified as a beef industry leader, once they began to analyze their role and think more about their contribution to the industry, they seemed to be satisfied with being identified as a leader.

**Theme One: The world is run by those who show up.** For those who had heard this statement, it definitely resonated with them and reminded them that if they want to be part of the decisions made impacting the future of the beef industry, they needed to be present for the discussions. For some of the other participants, they did not reference this statement specifically but they identified the importance of showing up at meetings, taking part and giving of their time.

**Theme Two: Represent what is best for the industry.** The participants clearly identified their pride for their role in the beef industry and how seriously they take their role of working with other producers to enhance and impact the future of the industry. Therefore, they had high expectations of leaders in the beef industry to represent the beef industry to the best of their ability and someone that is willing to put the goals of the organization/industry first.

**Theme Three: Be willing to carry the bucket of water.** A number of participants discussed the importance of a leader as being a “decision-maker.” The participants emphasized a leader must be able and willing to make a decision which will move the group forward, but there was almost as much focus in the statements from the participants on leaders making tough decisions, admitting they made the wrong decision if that is the case, and making decisions that are not always what the group wants to hear. So in essence, the leader is challenged to be “pushing the envelope” and in doing this requires taking a stand and making tough decisions.

**Theme Four: Gained while giving.** The beef industry has been described as an industry that often sees ranches and businesses passed down from generation to generation within families. However, three of the participants indicated they did not grow

up in the business they now are actively pursuing as their livelihood. Taking this into consideration, all of the participants expressed the importance of giving back to the industry. As a result of taking the time to volunteer and give back to the industry the participants have gained more and new knowledge, built relationships with fellow beef producers and being provided opportunities they would have not experienced had they become involved.

**Theme Five: Have innate leadership abilities.** When asked to list the traits or characteristics of a leader the participants listed many items. To them a leader was someone that was trustworthy, respectful, knowledgeable, a great listener and dedicated. Primarily they were describing their “perfect leader” and during the process of gathering the traits and characteristics of a leader from the participants, the researcher was aware that really it boiled down to someone with “character.” As a result of this character, the leader portrays to their peers, *seemingly effortless and innate leadership abilities*.

**Theme Six: A natural progression.** It was obvious that being a leader was not on the “To Do” list of these participants. They did not have a set plan or timeline where they said their goal was to be the president of the state cattlemen’s group. Rather, their rise to leadership occurred through a process of natural progression. In all cases, the leaders started to get active in their organizations whether they were recruited or started to volunteer for roles. As their dedication and time-commitment grew within the organizations they found their role snowballing into more and more leadership roles.

**Theme Seven: Selected by their peers.** Nearly half of the participants emphasized the way leaders are selected in the beef industry and brought attention to the fact it was their peers who selected them for leadership roles. If they were recruited to be

chairperson of the state animal health committee, they were often recruited by a peer.

This was expressed by several of the participants to be a humbling experience. It was an honor to have ones' peers consider them worthy of representing the organization and making decisions that could impact their peer's business.

The final method of analysis in a phenomenological study is the essence; which is a composite description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The essence of the experience in the phenomenological study is explained through an explanation of what the participants experienced and how they experienced it (Creswell, 2007).

### **The Essence**

The essence of what brings leaders in the beef industry to leadership roles is described by 12 beef producers who are actively involved in their local, state and national beef cattle membership organizations. As described by all the participants, their rise to leadership roles occurred as a result of a natural progression, without a detailed plan or much organized thought into the steps it would take to become a leader.

Leadership roles and skills were developed as the leaders got active in their organizations, most of them started at the local level and showed great interest in the beef industry and the goals of the organizations. As these leaders showed up and exhibited a presence at industry events and meetings, their dedication to the industry was noticed by their fellow peers. As a result of this awareness, these leaders were recruited for additional leadership roles and in some cases they volunteered for roles because they believed in the industry and they were able to balance the time commitment between their business and the volunteer roles.

Industry leadership occurs because of the strong pride and belief these leaders have in their industry and the awareness that if the industry is more viable, then so is the possibility their business will be more viable. It is important to industry leaders for them to represent their industry to the best of their ability and put the goals and mission of the industry before their personal beliefs. They consider this standard for themselves and other peer leaders who are chosen to represent the industry. Critical to their responsibility to being a beef industry leader is being able to be accountable, make decisions, see the big picture and help the industry move ahead. However, along with the role of making decisions becomes the understanding that some decisions will be challenging, tough and require the leader to step up to the plate, but as a leader, their peers are expecting the leader to make decisions to keep the industry viable.

Selection of leaders within the domain of the beef industry occurs by their peers. Fellow cattlemen and cattlemen who they have worked alongside for many years on committees and boards witness their abilities, their pride, their knowledge, their integrity and their communication skills and their overall character. To be selected by one's peers to represent their business and the industry is a humbling experience taken very seriously by today's beef industry leaders.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusions and Implications**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the significance of the findings presented in Chapter Four. The researcher followed the phenomenological approach of a qualitative study and Moustakas' (1994) method of interpretation and analysis of the data. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the central phenomenon experienced by beef industry leaders. With limited research in this area, this study focused on identifying themes that will validate why individuals take on leadership roles by analyzing the process, the motivations and the influences as well as the traits of beef industry leaders. This study will provide a greater perspective on beef industry leadership which may guide the future development and role of leaders.

#### **Conclusions**

The interviews provided rich, thick descriptions of the participants who all have experienced being a beef industry leader. With limited research conducted on volunteer peer industry leaders, this study has provided a foundation of research on this topic and a new understanding of those who serve today's agricultural organizations.

Three sub-questions aided the researcher in gathering more insight on the role and characteristics of beef industry leaders.

#### **Sub-question 1: How do industry leaders characterize industry leadership?**

Participants were asked to define or describe a leader. Responses included terms or phrases such as: "accountable," "take the hard stand," "good for the organization," "well-spoken on issues," "don't speak first," "articulate thoughts," "bring people together,"



“respected,” “sincere,” “empower,” and “personal charisma.” These responses and other responses defining and describing a leader are found in Figure 1. As the study participants described their perfect leader, it was obvious that they were looking for a person with character and integrity and one who they would be proud to say represents their industry. The participants emulated leaders who are respectful and have their heart in the right place (to represent the industry the best they can). Because of these characteristics they trust the leaders, will follow them and are confident that they will make the right decisions and stand by their decisions.

**Sub-question 2: How do industry leaders explain the process to become an industry leader?** The participants offered similar answers to this question. To the participants, their process to leadership was a natural progression that developed over time, but developed distinctly because of their willingness to actively serve the industry. The participants indicated they did not have a plan or did not chart their course to leadership. They said “things just fell into place,” “I don’t know if any of us enter into this with a plan,” or “it was instilled in our minds to be responsible for our actions.” Not only did the participants provide a common response to this question, they were also uniform in their response that they would not change anything about their process or role in becoming a leader. Maybe they would enroll in a speech class or some media training a few participants suggested, but the consensus was they would not alter the steps they took to leadership. Several of the leaders were surprised they were considered a leader and really had to step back and analyze their contribution to the industry and once they did, they realized they really were industry leaders. They were giving of their time, talents and energy for the betterment of the industry and working diligently to move the

industry forward and because of this dedication, their organizations were being lead and decisions were being made. Interestingly, the leaders moved through a natural course of progression of contributing their skills and learning about the issues. At times they believed they stepped up to the plate as volunteers when they saw a void, but at other times they were asked or recruited for an open leadership position because their peers had been witnessing their commitment and willingness to serve.

**Sub-question 3: How do industry leaders describe what influenced them to become leaders within the industry?** The research study participants were asked, Why did you become an industry leader? and, Were you motivated to be a leader and why? These two questions identified influences which may have impacted the participants' reasoning for being a leader. The most common answers to the two questions were "to give back to the industry that supports their livelihood" and because "they are proud of the industry." Participants were influenced to be leaders because "I care about the industry," "my life depends on it (the industry)," "to get involved and speak up on the issues and out of concern for the future of the industry," and "if it's an industry you are passionate about you want to make it better." The participants were motivated by a purpose — the purpose to speak up for their industry, to guarantee a future for the next generation, to stand up against outside influences that may be trying to bring the industry down, or because their feedlot or ranch has been in the family for generations and pride has been instilled in them to produce safe-wholesome food. Pride created a purpose as well as concern. If these leaders did not stand up for the industry then who would? Some of the leaders were influenced and encouraged by mentors, some had leadership skills

and abilities instilled in them during their tenure in the military or the national guard and some had observed leaders who they greatly respected.

The central question for this phenomenological study was: *What is industry leadership to beef industry leaders?* As the data was gathered and analyzed and themes developed, a common definition of industry leadership was developed by the researcher. Industry leadership is “a role fulfilled by someone who is willing to serve their industry, with the best of the industry in mind and taking on the responsibility and challenges that come along with making decisions to serve and speak for their peers with integrity.” Terms used to describe industry leadership participants were, “they’re dedicated towards improving their industry,” “put aside their personal goals and to look at what’s best for the industry,” “the responsibilities of leadership are great,” and “just being honest, being there for the right reasons.” The essence of beef industry leadership is displayed in Figure 2.

This study demonstrated qualities and characteristics similar to those identified by trait approach research (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Lord, DeVader, & Alliger, 1986; Mann, 1956; Stogdill, 1948, 1974; Zacco, Kemp, & Bader, 2004) and five central traits identified by Northouse (2010) indicative of one’s ability to be a leader (as cited in Northouse, 2010). Based upon the information gathered, it appears all of the five traits identified by Northouse (2010) — intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity and sociability — were closely aligned to those traits identified by the participants in this study. Traits identified by the participants were: “forward thinker,” “know the facts,” “confident,” “accountability,” “accept the consequences of the decisions,” “true to their

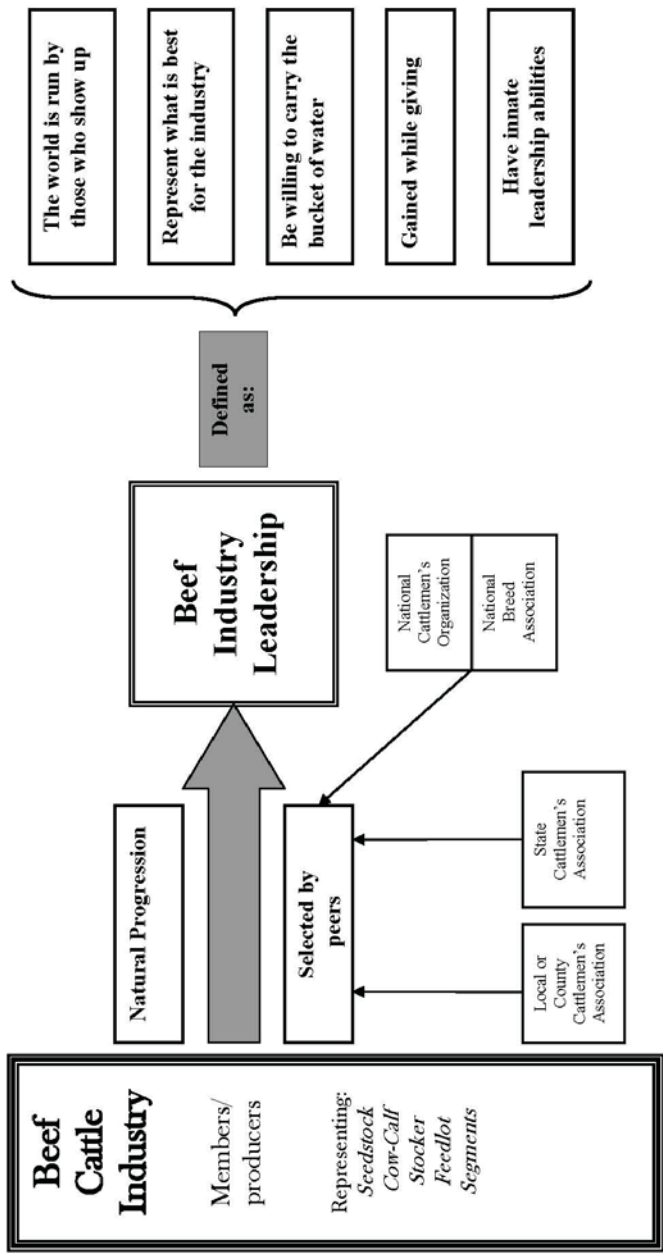


Figure 2. What is industry leadership to beef industry leaders?

convictions,” “great listeners,” “constant communicator,” and “be able to work with others.” The participants spoke often about “respect,” “garnering respect” and being “respectful.” Northouse (2010) indicates integrity leads to respect and it appears the beef industry leaders have this same interpretation.

In addition to identifying traits of leaders, study participants answered questions providing their views on their role as a leader as well as their perceptions of leadership. Kouzes and Posner (2002) asked leaders to describe their “personal best” experiences as leaders to measure leader behavior. Based on the leaders’ responses, Kouzes and Posner (2002) constructed a model of leadership consisting of five fundamental practices that enable leaders to become effective leaders. The fundamentals were: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart.

Table 10 identifies the linkage between Kouzes and Posner’s (2002) model of leadership to the comments heard from the beef study participants.

It is difficult to measure beef industry leaders against the theory of transformational leadership because transformational leadership is focused on the relationship between the leader and the follower (Bass, 1985, 1990a, 1990b). Transformational leadership is most often measured in an organizational development setting and results in achievement of higher levels of performance among individuals than anticipated (Bass, 1985). In the beef industry setting, leadership takes on a different structure than transformational leadership. Rather than the leader to follower relationship, the followers in the beef industry setting are peers of the leader and may be the peers that

Table 10

*Five Fundamentals of the Model of Leadership*

Five Fundamentals	Comments from Beef Industry Leaders
Model the Way	“I feel that a leader in our industry is someone who has offered up their talent, their time, their energy, for the good of the industry and not for selfish gain, but for whatever expertise that they might have and can offer up for the good of all” (participant, Allen).
Inspire a Shared Vision	“Leadership is about empowerment. It’s not about power . . . it’s about being able to empower other people and the ideas that other people have and to put those into a context that can be pushed forward into a vision” (participant, Tom).
Challenge the Process	“It has to be that individual that’s thinking past the current crisis . . . it has to be the individual that’s saying, “What are we going to face, not just what are we facing this year,” (participant, Cindy).
Enable others to Act	“To be the best leader, the one that everybody wants to represent them is . . . is everybody has to personally believe in you,” (participant, Matt).
Encourage at Heart	“I think a good leader has to be a good listener. take to heart what others are saying and seeing. They have to be able to motivate people and coach, teach, lead,” (participant, Robert).

recruited or supported that person to move into leadership. Taking the difference in structure into account, direct comparisons to transformational leadership are difficult, however some ties could be drawn between the way transformational leaders operate, based on their personal value systems (Bass, 1985) which includes integrity. Transformational leadership styles including inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration demonstrated in behaviors such as articulating goals, building an image, demonstrating confidence and arousing motivation (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987) which were also behaviors identified by the beef industry leader.

As well, many of the study participant’s responses were closely aligned to Greenleaf’s (1977, 1991) servant leadership theory. Servant leaders start at the ground

level, just as was described by many of the beef industry leaders. The beef leaders started their involvement in leadership by volunteering and getting active at the local level with beef cattle membership organizations and from the experiences and skills learned they became better equipped to be a leader. Spears (2010) describes servant leaders as those with the focus of involving others in the decision making process, demonstrating a caring and ethical behavior and interested in the success and improvement of the organization. As the participants discussed their view of leadership, they related very similar thoughts to Spear's (2010) description of servant leaders. Five dimensions of servant leadership were developed by Barbuto and Wheeler (2002) based on Greenleaf's model (1977) and Spears' (1995) list of characteristics (as cited in Barbuto and Wheeler, 2006).

Of these five dimensions, altruistic calling was identified as one's desire and willingness to serve others (Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) and is directly aligned to the first theme identified in the study, "The world is run by those who show up." Beef industry leaders are willing to serve their industry and do so because of the pride and belief they have for their industry and this demonstrates a dimension of servant leadership. Although altruistic calling appears to have the strongest connection between the comments made from the beef industry leaders and the identified dimensions of servant leadership, comments were made in the interviews that were representative of Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) descriptions of emotional healing, persuasive mapping and wisdom. Overall, the study results demonstrate a linkage between leadership in the beef industry and the servant leadership model.

The participants' interest in serving because of their altruistic calling was also congruent with what researchers found as to why individuals volunteer. Volunteers in

Peters (2010) study gave of their time to volunteer for their church because of their strong desire to make a difference and gain the satisfaction and rewards of knowing they were contributing to the cause. Empowered volunteers have a desire to make a difference (Peters, 2010), which matched the findings from this study where beef industry leaders were empowered to step forward to represent the industry to the best of their ability and remembering that their ability to lead impacted not only the industry, but the viability of their peers' businesses.

Barbuto and Scholl (1998) identified five sources of motivation of individual behavior. These five sources are: intrinsic process, instrumental, external self-concept, internal self-concept and goal internalization. This model is most commonly associated in organizational development settings, but as a result of an interest in learning what motivates an individual to become a leader, this study attempted to draw some linkages to the sources of motivation inventory model by Barbuto and Scholl (1998). Based on responses, the participants were motivated primarily due to their strong belief in the industry, their values being in sync with those of the organization, and strongly believing in the value of giving back to the industry for the betterment of the industry. The twelve participants' responses are most representative of goal internalized motivation. According to Barbuto and Scholl (1998), "behavior is motivated by goal internalization when the individual adopts attitudes and behaviors because the content is congruent with their personal value systems" (p. 1013). In other words, the person is motivated because they believe in the cause or the work of the organization and they are motivated to work towards a common goal for the betterment of the organization. Goal internalization was the most prevalent source of motivation for these beef industry leaders.



Other statements made by the leaders provided indications that may link them to additional sources of motivations such as internal self-concept and intrinsic. However, without the opportunity to conduct the complete Motivation Sources Inventory (Barbuto & Scholl, 1998) it is difficult to determine final or complete rankings of motivation by the participants.

### **Significance**

The first agricultural industry organizations were developed by the National Grange in 1867. Since that time, many agricultural organizations have been initiated and developed including commodity boards such as the corn or wheat board; Farm Bureau and Farmers Union at county, state and national levels; livestock breed organizations such as American Angus Association, American Quarter Horse Association; grower associations for agricultural commodities such as corn, wheat, apples, barley, wine etc.; and other organizations too numerous to list. These organizations which are primarily membership-based are structured to provide members with a legislative voice at the local, state and national level and influence governmental policy (National Grange, 2010) and volunteer leaders fill the roles of committee and board members to represent their industry (NCBA, 2010). This study offers significance to the field of leadership, to the beef industry and to agricultural organizations.

**Field of Leadership.** Limited studies have been conducted on leaders and leadership roles of agricultural industry organizations and include the level of involvement of producer members in beef organizations (Mathews & Carter, 2010), expectations of county board members of an agricultural organization (Carter & Rudd, 2006) and factors influencing leadership participation in a state farm organization (Carter

& Rudd, 2005). This study can offer a valuable contribution to these related studies and to the field of research on volunteer peer leaders. Peer leadership is unique to the more commonly studied leadership in formalized settings such as in the corporate business world, and this study helps to explain why individuals are willing to assume peer leadership roles (leading their peers) and the expectations of being in a peer leadership role. The beef industry is a viable economic driver for the United States (NASS, 2010). Beef producers rely on beef production for their livelihood and consumers rely on beef for consumption. A greater understanding of industry leadership will provide direction and support to organizations who rely on volunteer leaders to be the decision-makers, facilitators and representatives of their industry on legislative, economic, social and production issues.

There has been a significant lack of published research on agricultural leadership development programs (Hejny, 2010). Learning from studies on agricultural leadership development can provide a greater perspective of leaders in agriculture and prepare the industry for issues and challenges ahead.

**Beef Industry.** This study provides significant information for industries such as the beef industry who are seeking development of leaders and working to create an environment for future leaders. The study was designed to be most representative beef industry leaders. Representation of leaders from all of the industry segments (seedstock/cow-calf/stocker/feedlot) as well as a cross-section of age and gender not only enhanced the reliability of the study but made the study very pertinent to the industry. It is evident from this study a leader is one who serves their industry by devoting time, talents and energy for the betterment of the industry. It is evident a leader's skill set must

be applicable to meet the demands placed on the leaders, for the success of the leader in their volunteer role and in the eye's of their peers who have entrusted the leader to lead the organization.

Based on participant responses, there is a concern about the next generation of industry leaders available to move into leadership roles. Although some of the participants believe the opportunities are there and young people need to take the time to be active and express interest, others are concerned about the demands and pressures on young producers today both financially and time-wise, that may avert their participation.

**Organizations within the Industry.** The insights gained from this study will be most helpful to organizations such as NCBA and beef industry breed associations because their committee structure and boards are lead by volunteer leaders selected by their peers. As agriculture is confronted with issues such as government regulations, advocacy groups and supply and demand issues, leaders are called upon to guide and direct these organizations and the industry. This study provides agricultural organizations with a greater understanding of how current leaders define and describe the qualities and characteristics of a leader, but more importantly how leaders are developed, what they view as their role and their responsibility and how they perceive leadership

It is valuable to agricultural organizations to have research studies conducted on topics that are applicable to the viability and future of their organizations. This study provides a research basis for beef industry leaders in regards to the trait approach, the styles of leadership (servant, transformational), sources of motivations, and overall outline of what is industry leadership. Agricultural industry organizations could incorporate some of these foundations discussed and discovered in this study into their

organizational structure to aid them in developing leaders, selecting leaders and retaining leaders.

While there are several significant applications from this study, readers should be aware of the limitations presented by the study.

### **Limitations**

Although the number of interview participants selected was representative of a sample size recommended for a qualitative study (Creswell, 2007), caution is needed in generalizing a small sample size. However, this small number of participants did allow for in-depth interviews conducting a thorough review of the topic with each of the participants. Responses from additional participants may reveal additional rich, thick descriptions but may not yield evidence of new themes.

Qualitative studies are based on in-depth research gathering (Creswell, 2007) and a phenomenological study allows for a thorough review of the phenomenon. However, during the interview process it is left up to the researcher to determine what additional questions or probes to ask based on the responses from the researcher. This can influence the outcome of the study and can also provide limitations depending on the probes and instances of probing the researcher conducts.

Another limitation is the bias of the researcher. Because the researcher is actively involved in the beef industry and the study of leadership, the researcher bracketed her bias. However, it is difficult to entirely emulate the influence and bias of the researcher in a qualitative study (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010).

One of the criteria for sampling was a variation in age, gender and geographical location. This criterion was selected to be more representative of the beef industry in

general and more representative of a typical beef industry producer. However, limitations may have existed by not selecting duplicate producers from the same state who are clearly active in the industry. Although the selection of individuals from different states prevented the influence of a certain state association dominating the responses, it may have also prevented the rich, thick description from a second or third producer either representing that state or segment of the industry from contributing to the study.

### **Practical Implications**

The results of this study can direct very practical implications in the area of leadership and beef industry leader development such as: transitioning leadership from one generation to the next; leadership training, recruitment and development; clarification of roles for volunteer leaders; the process for volunteers to serve as industry leaders; a greater understanding of leaders in a non-formalized system; and the role of leaders in membership based organizations.

The respondents of this study expressed their interest to remain active as leaders. However, some of the leaders recognized that situations may arise that will limit their involvement such as time constraints, family issues, or retirement. This is an example of issues that typically will impact an organization. These issues along with the transition of leadership from one generation to the next are issues expressed in this study are valuable to organizations who are working towards volunteer stability within their organization and setting goals to prepare future leaders and for future leadership structure of their organizations.

This study can provide more awareness for young leaders about the role of leadership in volunteer peer leadership roles and provide some foundation for the

expectations they may encounter as a leader. This study could provide a basis for a seminar or conference on leadership and the development of leaders for organizations such as NCBA or Farm Bureau. Young leaders curious about their role in organizations and how to explore their interest of contribution to an organization may benefit from a conference addressing these issues.

In addition, this study can provide valuable information to organizations as they structure training and development of the next generation of leaders and current leaders. This study provides a framework for how people rise to leadership. The beef industry as well as agricultural industry organizations directed by volunteers can gain more awareness on effective methods of recruitment, training and longevity of volunteers.

As individuals study leadership they must remember much of the popular press as well as academic research is focused on formalized leadership, centered on a supervisor/subordinate relationship. Within the beef industry and other membership based agricultural organizations, leadership occurs in a non-formalized structure with leaders serving and leading their peers. A different focus must take place within organizations where the leaders are volunteer peer leaders in a non-formalized structure. This study can provide a foundation on leadership in a non-formalized structure that can be used by organizations as they work with volunteers. Organization leaders should consider the findings of this study and incorporate these findings into the organizations' structure and processes in order to create a successful and meaningful volunteer experience for both the volunteer and the organization.

One of NCBA's 2011-2013 Long Range Plan core strategies is to "develop an industry wide-leadership development program to improve industry relationships and

ensure a pipeline of informed, prepared and competent industry leaders” (NCBA, 2011). This study can be a great value as NCBA sets out to meet this core strategy over the next three years.

The results of this study could be incorporated into the training and education conducted in formal agricultural leadership development programs such as those associated with land-grant institutions. Formal agricultural leadership development programs are focused on developing leaders to address the challenges and issues impacting agriculture and our communities (Hejny, 2010). Many of the participants in agricultural leadership development programs are involved in membership based organizations such as NCBA or breed associations. As program participants seek to learn more about their own development as an agricultural leader, the findings, themes and conclusions of this study provide very valuable and applicable knowledge that can be directly incorporated into the program’s curricula to teach about peer leadership.

Agricultural institutions such as the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR) at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) are training young people for future careers in agriculture and also working with producers and citizens of the state to keep Nebraska a viable place to live and raise families. Challenges facing agriculture described in the *Innovating Agriculture and Natural Resources to 2025 —Food, Energy, and Water Security – for Healthy People in Vibrant Communities Strategic Plan* include meeting nutrient needs of an increasing global population, sustainability of natural resources such as water and energy, competition for resources and needs of the world’s growing economy (IANR- UNL, 2011). “Addressing the big problems will require involvement of the entire community in seeking solutions” (IANR-UNL, 2011).

Agricultural leaders will be tapped to help institutions such as UNL seek solutions. This study can provide insight into working with agricultural volunteer leaders and what motivates them to contribute and be part of the problem solving process.

### **Implications for Future Research**

In addition to the suggestions outlined in the limitation section, other recommendations that would lend a deeper understanding of beef industry leaders would include the following ideas.

1. Study participants were asked if they had taken part in any formalized leadership programs. Some but not all of the respondents had previously participated in a leadership development program. Study participants spoke highly of the programs, but it was not clearly articulated if participation in these programs were influential on their role in becoming or staying active as a beef industry leader. Thus, further study to determine if there is a tie between those attending leadership development programs and those serving in peer leadership roles would be beneficial to the field of study.
2. The researcher was interested in knowing what motivated the study participants to serve as industry leaders. Responses were given and analyzed against the Motivational Sources Inventory (Barbuto & Scholl, 1998) model. More concise and reliable data may come from having the participants take the Motivation Sources Inventory instrument. This would be most useful across a larger group of participants so conclusions can be made regarding their motivational sources.



3. This study was a qualitative study. It provided an in-depth analysis of the central phenomenon and was conducted on a small sample size. Consideration should be given to conducting a mixed-method study where data can be collected both quantitatively and qualitatively. This would allow for the analysis of a larger sample of individuals serving in leadership roles that may allow for the opportunity to test the themes determined by this qualitative study and possibly confirm or indicate other possible themes. The mixed-method study would allow for more questions to be asked and the ability to rank traits of leaders, participation focus and involvement by leaders.
4. Study participants mentioned their roles as beef industry leaders were the result of selection by their peers. The majority of studies on leadership have been conducted either studying just the leader, just the follower of the leader-follower relationship. There is virtually no focus of study on peer leadership. Therefore, further study should be conducted in this area to gain the much needed research documentation to guide peer leadership and peer leaders.

### **Researcher's Summary**

As the researcher, I have great interest in both the beef industry and leadership qualities of beef industry leaders. After 20 years working professionally in agriculture, focusing on the beef industry, I was intently aware of many of the issues, committees and organizations that were discussed during the interviews. I had heard of many of the participants previously, by name only, because of my industry involvement, but only two of the participants did I know personally, and one more so than the other.

As I reflect back on the themes that emerged from the findings, I was proud of the thought-provoking comments this group of leaders presented. I was impressed with their demeanor, politeness, and professionalism during the telephone conversation. They mentioned many items that were in tune with the other participants, but they also each had a unique and personal way of viewing their role as a leader and leadership in the industry. It was gratifying to hear comments about the industry in general and it was also intriguing to hear their definition of leaders and the overall characteristics they envision a leader to be. I have great interest in seeing the beef industry succeed against the challenges and issues that arise, and knowing that strong leaders are in roles of leadership with innate leadership abilities is reassuring.

I was surprised that more of them did not mention the role of a mentor during their rise to leadership. Four individuals signified they had a mentor and that the mentor played an important role primarily in the participant's decision to step into additional leadership roles and responsibilities. Most of the participants had a role model or someone they emulated as a successful leader. However, when asked if there was someone outside the beef industry they considered a role model, only three of the 12 identified a leader. I was interested to hear if there was a leader totally outside their focus on agriculture that may have also influenced their leadership style and growth; such as a leader from the field of politics, science, military, or society in general. For the most part, this was not the case and may have been because the participants were focusing in on the beef industry during the conversation.

It was clear the participants did not have an organized plan towards their development of personal leadership traits (or qualities). Many of the participants have

had the opportunity to participate in formal leadership development programs; some of these programs were state agricultural leadership development programs, media or communications short-courses or a national study tour for young leaders. The participants spoke highly of their participation in these formal leadership training programs emphasizing the educational experiences. Yet, it did not appear that the leadership programs were a primary factor in these leaders continuing to participate in leadership roles within their organizations. Three of the participants indicated they did not have any or very, very little training through any type of a leadership program and this did not seem to hinder their willingness, interest or confidence to serve. It was the older participants who did not participate in leadership training and this was because they were not exposed to it to the degree younger people are today with the area of leadership programs through organizations, universities and youth programs.

As the research study participants reflected on their time as a leader and steps throughout the process, a common thread was their emphasis on “giving of their time,” and “being present” and this was emphasized in the quotes and discussion of the first theme – *The world is run by those who show up*. These leaders were obviously willing to give of their time through service to the industry for the betterment of the industry, the betterment of their business and the overall satisfaction of knowing they contributed. I know from my experiences of participating in organizations and serving in leadership roles with organizations such as 4-H, cattle industry organizations and other general agricultural organizations, the time is demanding and requires a balance between one’s career and volunteer role.

I found participant comments about the seventh theme — *Selected by your peers* — very interesting as they talked about the process of moving into leadership roles and the importance of the selection by peers. Comments included “my peers know me better than my family,” and “it is an honor to be selected by your peers.” Due to my extensive beef industry involvement I have witnessed the movement of individual beef industry leaders through positions and into top leadership roles. In some cases, I have been fortunate to personally know the individuals in these roles, and in other cases I was aware of them only from discussions with my peers or in a large meeting setting. I have been intrigued by watching this process happen and also watching young leaders grow into positions of more and more responsibility within organizations and garner more and more respect from their peers. There is a great responsibility to represent your peers, and to do so with respect and dedication.

Being a leader in the industry and serving in volunteer roles I have been fortunate to be able to meet and get to know many leaders personally, and these are leaders who I emulate because of their abilities and leadership qualities. I was pleased to hear the research study participants discuss the importance of integrity as a trait for a leader. In my definition of a leader, integrity is very much near the top of the traits one should possess, so it was rewarding to hear the participants also confirm the importance of this trait among the leaders they look up to and respect. Hearing comments like “trustworthy,” “sincere,” “their word is their bond,” and “true to their convictions” as well as the word integrity repeated many times during the telephone conversations confirmed to me the importance of this trait in a true industry leader.

## Summary

Seven themes emerged from this study: (a) The world is run by those who show up; (b) Represent what is best for the industry; (c) Be willing to carry the bucket of water; (d) Gained while giving; (e) Have innate leadership abilities; (f) A natural progression; and (g) Selected by Peer leaders. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore beef industry leadership positions of industry membership organizations. These seven themes explained in Chapter Four and analyzed in this, Chapter Five, provide the researcher with a greater perspective of leaders in the beef industry and what brings people to leadership.

This study was of great interest to the researcher. Once the interviews were conducted and the participants had a greater awareness of the project, they expressed an interest in seeing the “final” results. It also appeared to the researcher that it was an opportunity for the participants to stop and take a look at their contribution to the beef industry and both, pat themselves on the back for serving their industry with as much dedication, pride and time commitment as they do, and also look ahead to future contributions they are likely to offer their industry.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Institutional Review of Board Approval**





February 21, 2011

Beverley Gordon  
Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication  
5870 N 21st Lincoln, NE 68521

Jason Ellis  
Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication  
300 AGH, UNL, 68583-0709

IRB Number: 20110211570 EX  
Project ID: 11570  
Project Title: What Brings People to Leadership Roles - A Study of Beef Industry Leaders

Dear Beverley:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 02/21/2011.

1. The approved informed consent form has been uploaded to NUgrant (file with -Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use this form to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent form, please submit the revised form to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- \* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- \* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- \* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- \* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- \* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

<https://mug.unt.edu/irb/viewPrintedMessage.php?ID=74265>

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP  
for the IRB



## **Appendix B**

### **Informed Consent Form**



INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL  
RESOURCES  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP,  
EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION

## Informed Consent Form

### *Title of Project:*

*“What brings people to leadership roles – A study of Beef Industry Leaders”*

### Purpose of the Research:

This study will assist in identifying and understanding why those involved in the beef industry choose to take on a leadership role. The study will provide a greater perspective of leaders in the industry. The information discovered in this study will be valuable information for the beef industry offering important information about volunteer roles, leadership perspectives and styles, motivations of leaders and many other new perspectives. This new information may be utilized by the industry to both, train and solicit volunteer leaders and/or develop leadership programs for beef producers. You must be 19 years of age or older to participate. You were invited to participate in the study because you serve in the role of a leader within one or more beef industry membership organizations.

### Procedures:

The data will be collected for this study through telephone interviews. The interview will discuss your experience as a leader in the beef industry and will require approximately 60 minutes of your time. You will be asked to read and sign this Informed Consent Form, allowing the interview to be audio-taped. The information you share will be strictly confidential. The interview will consist of six questions. Questions will focus on your leadership role and your involvement in the beef industry. Because this is a telephone interview you can choose the location of where you would like the interview to take place (home, office, etc.), a location that is convenient and quiet for you. Again, the interview will be audio-taped to ensure that all responses are recorded. The interview will be transcribed and you will have the opportunity to verify the transcription.

### Risks and/or Discomforts:

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study.

### Benefits:

There may be no direct benefit to you as a participant in the research; however, you may find the interview an enjoyable opportunity to share about your experiences as a leader in the beef industry. Additionally, the information you provide in the interview will be most valuable in the entire context of the study and providing a greater understanding to academia and the beef



industry about the role of today's beef industry leaders.

**Confidentiality**

Any information obtained during this study which could potentially identify you will be kept confidential. Your name will not be included in the project or other documents. A pseudonym will be used in place of your name in the transcripts of the interview and in any other locations such as quotes that might be cited in the study or other documents. Any other items that might identify you will also be omitted or labeled generically, e.g. (state changed to Northwest producer).

The data will be kept only in the hands of the research team throughout the study. This data will not be kept for more than three years after the study's completion. However, results from the study will be included in a University dissertation or may be included in an academic journal or presented at academic meetings to aid the industry in gaining a greater understanding of leadership and leaders within the industry. The data will be reported as aggregate data.

**Opportunity to Ask Questions:**

If you have any questions about this research study you are welcome to call me, the principal investigator, at any time @ 402.416.9454 or via e-mail at [lynn.gordon@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:lynn.gordon@huskers.unl.edu). Feel free to ask any questions, before or during the study that you may have. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject that have not been answered by the principal investigator or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Institutional Review Board at 402.472.6965.

**Freedom to Withdraw:**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You are free to decide to not participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or the University of Nebraska – Lincoln. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:**

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Do you agree to be audio recorded during the interview? Please respond to one of these.  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ or No \_\_\_\_\_ (Please initial for your response)

Signature of Research Participant:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name:



Please fax this form upon completion to: 402. 472.5863. If you are unable to Fax this form, please contact the investigator for further instructions.

Name and Telephone Number of Investigator(s):

B. Lynn Gordon, Doctoral Candidate, Principal Investigator

Jason Ellis, Ph.D, Secondary Investigator

Cell: 402.416.9454

Office: 402.472.9782

## **Appendix C**

### **Script for Initial Email Message to Invite Participants**



### Script for Initial Email Message To Invite Participants

(Date) \_\_\_\_\_ IRB# \_\_\_\_\_

Dear (name of beef industry leader):

I am aware that you are an active leader within the beef industry and as a result I would like to give you the opportunity to be part of an exciting study to look at today's beef industry leaders. I'm asking for your help and inviting you to participate in a research study to gain a greater understanding why people evolve to be leaders in the beef industry. I would certainly appreciate your cooperation in assisting with this project and have tried to keep the time commitment on your behalf limited because I know you are very busy and dedicated to your beef business. The research study is for the completion of my doctoral degree in Leadership Studies at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln.

Your participation in the study will consist of a telephone interview that will require approximately 60 minutes. You can choose the location of where you want to be for the interview, I just ask that it is a quiet place without distractions so that we can promptly move through the interview. The interview will be audio taped to ensure that all responses are recorded properly. I will ask six questions that will focus on your current role as a beef industry leader. Prior to the interview, you will be asked to verify your participation with the completion of a required "Informed Consent Form". If you are interested in assisting me with this research, please respond back via email indicating your confirmation to participate. Also, be sure to include your telephone numbers, so that I can contact you in the near future to set up a date and time for the interview.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study and any information obtained during the study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not be included in the study or any associated documents. A pseudonym will be used in place of your actual name. Any other items that might identify you will also be omitted or labeled generically, e.g. (state changed to Northwest producer). The data will be kept only in the hands of the research team throughout the study. However, results from the study will be included in a University dissertation or may be included in an academic journal or presented at academic meetings to aid the industry in gaining a greater understanding of leadership and leaders within the industry. The data will be reported as aggregate data.

If you have any questions about this research study you are welcome to call me, the principal investigator, at any time @ 402.416.9454 or via e-mail at [lynn.gordon@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:lynn.gordon@huskers.unl.edu). Feel free to ask any questions, before or during the study that you may have. If you have any



questions regarding your rights as a research subject that have not been answered by the principal investigator or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Institutional Review Board at 402.472.6965.

You are free to decide to not participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

There may be no direct benefit to you as a participant in the research; however, you may find the interview an enjoyable opportunity to share about your experiences as a leader in the beef industry. Additionally, the information you provide in the interview will be most valuable in the entire context of the study and providing a greater understanding to academia and the beef industry about the role of today's beef industry leaders.

I hope that you will consider assisting me with this research.

Sincerely,

B. Lynn Gordon, Primary Investigator

Dr. Jason Ellis, Secondary Investigator

## **Appendix D**

### **Telephone Script to Confirm Time and Date for Interview**

**Script for Telephone Conversation to finalize Date and Time of Telephone Interview:**

Principal Investigator (P.I.) :

Hello and good (morning, afternoon, evening) (first name of the participant).

Thank you for your email response indicating your interest to participate in my research study to learn more about beef industry leaders. Do you have any questions about the research study or what is required of you as a participant?

Participant: (If questions are asked P.I. will answer them).

P.I.: I am calling to set up some time for us to conduct the phone interview. How is your schedule this week? Is there time we can schedule a 60 minute block of time to conduct the interview. Prior to the interview I will email you a copy of the Informed Consent Form to review and sign.

Participant: (response)

P.I.: So to confirm, you will be available for me to call you at (time and date), to conduct the interview. (Participant Response). Can I verify the phone number? (P. Response).

P.I.: I look forward to the opportunity to review the interview questions with you and to hear your responses about being a leader in the beef industry. At this time, do you have any questions about the research study or what is required of you as a participant?

P.I.: Two days before our scheduled interview, I will send you a reminder email. If your schedule has changed and you will not be able to visit with me at the set time and date, please give me a call at 402-416-9454 so that we can set up another time.

P.I.: At that same time and in that same email I will include the questions for the interview so that you will have time to start thinking about them. Feel free to jot down any notes that you have when you read the questions to assist you in preparation for the final interview. The "Reminder Email" will also contain the Informed Consent Form which is required that you review, sign and date prior to the interview.

I know this seems like a lot of information. Are you clear on what the next steps will be?

I will email these to you at (confirm email).

Participants (response).

P.I. Again, I really appreciate your cooperation with this research study and I look forward to our conversation. Thanks so much for your willingness to help me out and your continued contribution to the beef industry as a leader and through assisting with a project such as this. Thanks and Goodbye.

Participant Response:

P.I. Thanks again. Goodbye.

## **Appendix E**

### **Email Reminder for Interview**

**Email Reminder for Telephone Interview**

(Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Dear (name of beef industry leader):

Thank you for agreeing to be a participant in my research study on beef industry leaders. I know that your time is very valuable so your willingness to assist with the project it is appreciated.

This is just a short reminder that I will be calling you at \_\_\_\_\_ (Phone Number) at \_\_\_\_\_ (Time and Date), to conduct a 60 minute interview about your role as a leader in the beef industry in efforts to gather data for my research study.

As a reminder, your participation in the study will consist of a telephone interview that will require approximately 60 minutes. I encourage you to select a quiet place without distractions for the duration of the telephone interview. The interview will be audio taped to ensure that all responses are recorded properly.

This email also contains two additional items that are very important to the study:

- 1) The list of six questions that I will be asking in the telephone interview. I wanted to provide you with time to look over the questions give them some thought and possibly write down some notes. This should also speed up the interview process as you will have had time to give each question some prior thought.
- 2) The Informed Consent Form. This is an important form. Please take the time to read the form and it is required that you sign and date this form indicating your willingness to participate in the interview and that you understand the parameters of the project.
  - a. Please fax a signed copy of this form back to 402.472.5863 prior to our scheduled interview.
  - b. In the case that you do not have time to fax the Informed Consent Form prior to our scheduled interview, I will review the form and ask for your verbal consent prior to the beginning of the interview. However, you will still be asked to fax the form to me at the conclusion of the interview as I must receive a copy with your signature.

If you have any questions final questions before we talk formally please feel free to contact me at 402.416.9454 or via e-mail at [lynn.gordon@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:lynn.gordon@huskers.unl.edu).

Sincerely,

B. Lynn Gordon, Primary Investigator

Dr. Jason Ellis, Secondary Investigator

## **Appendix F**

### **Interview Protocol**

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – Beef Industry Leaders

Project: *“What brings people to leadership roles – A study of Beef Industry Leaders”*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Representing which sector of the beef industry: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Introduction:**

Thank you for agreeing to be one of the participants in this research study. I will be asking you a series of questions about your role as beef industry leader and the entire telephone interview will be audio recorded so that it can be transcribed at a later date. You will have the opportunity to review the transcribed interview to check for errors, etc. The transcription may also include any notes that I make during the interview. The goal is to capture your thoughts on the topic of the research study. Please understand that participating in this study is voluntary and during the course of this interview you are free to opt out or discontinue without any penalty to you. While there are no immediate benefits to you in this study, your responses will help the researcher to gain a greater understanding of leadership and leader's roles in the beef industry.

#### **Project Overview:**

This study will assist in identifying and understanding why those involved in the beef industry choose to take on a leadership role by providing a greater perspective of leaders in the industry. The study will interview only current beef industry leaders about their roles in leadership positions. The information gathered from this study will be valuable to the beef industry in general as it will provide a greater perspective on why people become leaders in their respective membership organizations and what can be learned from today's leaders that will guide organizations and leadership programs in the future as they continue to develop and work with leaders. This study will identify leadership styles prevalent in the beef industry and will look at what influences and motivates individuals.

#### **Review of Consent Form:**

Before we start I must ask that you have read and reviewed the Informed Consent Form and indicated your consent to participate in the project by signing the consent form. If you have not already done so, you must fax the form back to the principal investigator.

#### **Interview Questions:**

I will be asking you questions about your role as a beef industry leader. Please feel at ease to discuss your thoughts and perspectives on the issues. If at any point during the interview you would like clarification



on a question or want to go back and add information to previous questions, please don't hesitate to stop me. Or if you have a specific question, we can certainly take the time to address it. I would like for you to be comfortable and enjoy sharing your thoughts during the interview.

Are you ready for the first question?

#### **QUESTIONS:**

##### **1) In your opinion, what does “Being an industry leader” mean to you?**

Example Probes:

- a) Please describe your role as a leader in the beef industry.
- b) What volunteer leadership roles do you currently hold and with which organization?
- c) What roles do you conduct that you do so because of being a leader?

##### **2) How would you describe the process or steps you took or experienced in becoming a beef industry leader?**

Example Probes:

- a) Were you recruited, asked or self-chosen to be a leader??
- b) Have you completed any leadership training or participated in leadership development programs?
- c) Why did you become an industry leader?
- d) Were you motivated to be a leader and why?

##### **3) How would you define or describe a “Leader”?**

Example Probes:

- a) Characteristics/styles
- b) Is there a person to you who represents being a leader? What is it about them that make them a leader from your viewpoint?
- c) Are there essential skills they possess or should possess?

##### **4) How has your experience of serving in a leadership role influenced your views of such positions and the people who serve in them?**

Example Probes:

- a) Who should serve as leaders?

##### **5) Is there anything you would change about your process or role in becoming a leader?**

Example Probes:

- a) Training, mentoring, skills needed?

##### **6) What are your plans for future involvement as a leader in the industry?**

## **Appendix G**

### **Transcriptionist Consent Form**

**Transcriptionist Confidentiality Form**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby agree that I will maintain  
(name of transcriptionist)

confidentiality of interviews that I have been contracted to transcribe for the following research project: "What brings people to leadership – Beef Industry Leaders". I will not discuss or share any tape-recorded or transcribed data with any individuals other than the principal investigator, B. Lynn Gordon or her advisor, Dr. Jason Ellis. When the transcriptions are complete, I will return all audio-tapes to B. Lynn Gordon and will transfer all research files to the principal investigator. Upon confirmation of the receipt of these files from the principal investigator, I will destroy the originals that I have on file.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of transcriptionist)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

## **Appendix H**

### **Interview Validation Form**

### Validation of Telephone Interview Transcript

**Title of Research Study:**

*"What brings people to leadership roles – A study of Beef Industry Leaders"*

**Dear Participant:**

Please review the attached transcript from our recent telephone interview about your role as a leader in the beef industry. The transcript was transcribed from the audio tape of our interview. I would like for you to take the time to read through the transcript and check for any errors that may result in the data not being correctly interpreted during the transcription or during the telephone interview.

Once you have read through the transcript, please check one of the following statements by placing an "X" in the appropriate statement.

\_\_\_\_\_ I approve of the interview transcript without any changes.

\_\_\_\_\_ I approve of the interview transcript with the noted changes.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not approve of the interview transcript.

If you do not prefer to read through the transcript and feel confident that the interview was conducted most accurately please indicate here by placing an "X".

\_\_\_\_\_ I approve of the interview transcript without the need for reviewing it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of the research participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Fax this form to 402.472.5863 or e-mail to [lynn.gordon@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:lynn.gordon@huskers.unl.edu) that you have received this form and indicate the above choice you selected.

Thanks

B. Lynn Gordon, Research Study Principal Investigator  
Jason D. Ellis, Ph.D., Secondary Investigator